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WALTER BAGEHOT

M. A., AND FELLOW OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, LONDON

WITH MEMOIRS BY R. H. HUTTON

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BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES.

*THE CHARACTER OF SIR ROBERT PEEL.**

(1856.)

MOST people have looked over old letters; they have been struck with the change of life, with the doubt on things now certain, the belief in things now incredible, the oblivion of what now seems most important, the strained attention to departed detail, which characterize the moldering leaves. Something like this is the feeling with which we read Sir Robert Peel's Memoirs. Who now doubts on the Catholic Question? it is no longer a "question." A younger generation has come into vigorous, perhaps into insolent life, who regard the doubts that were formerly entertained as absurd, pernicious, delusive. To revive the controversy was an error: the accusations which are brought against a public man in his own age are rarely those echoed in after times; posterity sees less or sees more. A few points stand forth in distinct rigidity; there is no idea of the countless accumulation, the collision of action, the web of human feeling, with which in the day of their life they were encompassed. Time changes much: the points of controversy seem clear, the assumed premises uncertain; the difficulty is to comprehend "the difficulty." Sir Robert Peel will have to answer to posterity, not

* Memoirs, by the Right Hon. Sir Robert Peel, Bart., M. P., etc. Published by the Trustees of his Papers, Lord Mahon (now Earl Stanhope) and the Right Hon. Edward Cardwell, M. P. Part i., the Roman Catholic Question, 1828-9.

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for having passed Catholic emancipation when he did, but for having opposed it before; not for having been precipitate, but for having been slow; not for having taken "insufficient securities" for the Irish Protestant Church, but for having endeavored to take security for an institution too unjust to be secured by laws or lawgivers.

This memoir has, however, a deeper aim: its end is rather personal than national; it is designed to show not that Sir Robert did what was externally expedient, — this was probably too plain, — but that he himself really believed what he did to be right. The scene is laid not in Ireland, not in the county of Clare, not amid the gross triumphs of O'Connell or the outrageous bogs of Tipperary, but in the Home Office, among files of papers, among the most correctly docketed memoranda, beside the minute which shows that Justice A should be dismissed, that Malefactor O ought not to be reprieved. It is labeled "My Conscience," and is designed to show that "my conscience" was sincere.

Seriously, and apart from jesting, this is no light matter. Not only does the great space which Sir Robert Peel occupied during many years in the history of the country entitle his character to the anxious attention of historical critics, but the very nature of that character itself — its traits, its deficiencies, its merits are so congenial to the tendencies of our time and government, that to be unjust to him is to be unjust to all probable statesmen. We design to show concisely how this is.

A constitutional statesman is in general a man of common opinions and uncommon abilities. The reason is obvious. When we speak of a free government, we mean a government in which the sovereign power is divided, in which a single decision is not absolute, where argument has an office. The essence of the *gouvernement des avocats*, as the Emperor Nicholas called it, is, that you must persuade so

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many persons. The appeal is not to the solitary decision of a single statesman,—not to Richelieu or Nesselrode alone in his closet,—but to the jangled mass of men, with a thousand pursuits, a thousand interests, a thousand various habits. Public opinion, as it is said, rules; and public opinion is the opinion of the average man. Fox used to say of Burke, "Burke is a wise man, but he is wise too soon."* The average man will not bear this: he is a cool, common person, with a considerate air, with figures in his mind, with his own business to attend to, with a set of ordinary opinions arising from and suited to ordinary life. He can't bear novelty or originalities; he says, "Sir, I never heard such a thing *before* in my life," and he thinks this a *reductio ad absurdum*. You may see his taste by the reading of which he approves. Is there a more splendid monument of talent and industry than the *Times*? No wonder that the average man—that any one—believes in it. As Carlyle observes:—"Let the highest intellect, able to write epics, try to write such a leader for the morning newspapers: it cannot do it; the highest intellect will fail."† But did you ever see anything there you had never seen before? Out of the million articles that everybody has read, can any one person trace a single marked idea to a single article? Where are the deep theories and the wise axioms and the everlasting sentiments which the writers of the most influential publication in the world have been the first to communicate to an ignorant species? Such writers are far too shrewd. The two million or whatever number of copies it may be they publish, are not purchased because the buyers wish to know new truth. The purchaser desires an article which he can appreciate at sight; which he can lay

* "Burke is right after all [about the French Revolution]; but Burke is often right—only he is right too soon" (Bell's "Life of Canning," Chap. viii.).

† "Life of Sterling," Part ii., Chap. xii.,—a very rough quotation.

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down and say, "An excellent article, very excellent—exactly my own sentiments."* Original theories give trouble; besides, a grave man on the Coal Exchange does not desire to be an apostle of novelties among the contemporaneous dealers in fuel,—he wants to be provided with remarks he can make on the topics of the day which will not be known *not* to be his, that are not too profound, which he can fancy the paper only reminded him of. And just in the same way, precisely as the most popular political paper is not that which is abstractedly the best or most instructive, but that which most exactly takes up the minds of men where it finds them, catches the floating sentiment of society, puts it in such a form as society can fancy would convince another society which did not believe; so the most influential of constitutional statesmen is the one who most felicitously expresses the creed of the moment, who administers it, who embodies it in laws and institutions, who gives it the highest life it is capable of, who induces the average man to think, "I could not have done it any better if I had had time myself."

It might be said that this is only one of the results of that tyranny of commonplace which seems to accompany civilization. You may talk of the tyranny of Nero and Tiberius; but the real tyranny is the tyranny of your next-door neighbor. What law is so cruel as the law of doing what he does? What yoke is so galling as the necessity of being like him? What espionage of despotism comes to your door so effectually as the eye of the man who lives at your door? Public opinion is a permeating influence, and it exacts obedience to itself; it requires us to think other men's thoughts, to speak other men's words, to follow other men's habits. Of course, if we do not, no formal ban issues; no corporeal pain, no coarse penalty of a barbarous society is inflicted on the offender: but we are called "eccentric"; there is a gentle murmur of "most unfortunate ideas,"

* See Vol. ii., page 425, of this edition.

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"singular young man," "well-intentioned, I dare say; but unsafe, sir, quite unsafe." The prudent of course conform: the place of nearly everybody depends on the opinion of every one else. There is nothing like Swift's precept to attain the repute of a sensible man, "Be of the opinion of the person with whom at the time you are conversing."* This world is given to those whom this world can trust. Our very conversation is infected: where are now the bold humor, the explicit statement, the grasping dogmatism of former days? they have departed, and you read in the orthodox works dreary regrets that the *art* of conversation has passed away. It would be as reasonable to expect the art of walking to pass away: people talk well enough when they know to whom they are speaking; we might even say that the art of conversation was improved by an application to new circumstances. "Secrete your intellect, use common words, say what you are expected to say," and you shall be at peace; the secret of prosperity in common life is to be commonplace on principle.

Whatever truth there may be in these splenetic observations might be expected to show itself more particularly in the world of politics: people dread to be thought unsafe in proportion as they get their living by being thought to be safe. "Literary men," it has been said, "are outcasts;" and they are eminent in a certain way notwithstanding. "They can say strong things of their age; for no one expects they will go out and act on them." They are a kind of ticket-of-leave lunatics, from whom no harm is for the moment expected; who seem quiet, but on whose vagaries a practical public must have its eye. For statesmen it is different: they must be thought men of judgment. The most morbidly agricultural counties

* There is no such sentence in Swift's works, and what it is meant for is past guessing. The nearest approach I find to it is the very different advice in "Hints for an Essay on Conversation," "never to say a thing which any of the company can reasonably wish we had rather left unsaid." — Ed.

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were aggrieved when Mr. Disraeli was made Chancellor of the Exchequer: they could not believe he was a man of solidity, and they could not comprehend taxes by the author of "Coningsby" or sums by an adherent of the Caucasus. "There is," said Sir Walter Scott, "a certain hypocrisy of action, which, however it is despised by persons intrinsically excellent, will nevertheless be cultivated by those who desire the good repute of men."* Politicians, as has been said, live in the repute of the commonalty. They may appeal to posterity; but of what use is posterity? Years before that tribunal comes into life, your life will be extinct; it is like a moth going into Chancery. Those who desire a public career must look to the views of the living public; an immediate exterior influence is essential to the exertion of their faculties. The confidence of others is your *fulcrum:* you cannot—many people wish you could—go into Parliament to represent yourself; you must conform to the opinions of the electors, and they, depend on it, will not be original. In a word, as has been most wisely observed, "under free institutions it is necessary occasionally to defer to the opinions of other people; and as other people are obviously in the wrong, this is a great hindrance to the improvement of our political system and the progress of our species."

Seriously, it is a calamity that this is so: occasions arise in which a different sort of statesman is required. A year or two ago we had one of these. If any politician had come forward in this country, on the topic of the war, with prepared intelligence, distinct views, strong will, commanding mastery, it would have brought support to anxious intellects and comfort to a thousand homes; none such came. Our people would have statesmen who thought as they

*Mangled from this passage in the preface to "Carleton's Memoirs" (quoted in Lockhart, Vol. ii., Chap. vi.):—"There is a certain hypocrisy in business, whether civil or military, as well as in religion, which they will do well to observe who, not satisfied with discharging their duty, desire also the good repute of men."—ED.

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thought, believed as they believed, acted as they would have acted; they had desired to see their own will executed. There came a time when they had no clear will, no definite opinion: they reaped as they had sown; as they had selected an administrative tool, of course it did not turn out a heroic leader.

If we wanted to choose an illustration of these remarks out of all the world, it would be Sir Robert Peel. No man has come so near our definition of a constitutional statesman, — the powers of a first-rate man and the creed of a second-rate man. From a certain peculiarity of intellect and fortune, he was never in advance of his time. Of almost all the great measures with which his name is associated, he attained great eminence as an opponent before he attained even greater eminence as their advocate. On the Corn Laws, on the currency, on the amelioration of the criminal code, on Catholic emancipation, — the subject of the memoir before us, — he was not one of the earliest laborers or quickest converts. He did not bear the burden and heat of the day: other men labored, and he entered into their labors. As long as these questions remained the property of first-class intellects, as long as they were confined to philanthropists or speculators, as long as they were only advocated by austere, intangible Whigs, Sir Robert Peel was against them; so soon as these same measures, by the progress of time, the striving of understanding, the conversion of receptive minds, became the property of second-class intellects, Sir Robert Peel became possessed of them also: he was converted at the conversion of the average man. His creed was, as it had ever been, ordinary; but his extraordinary abilities never showed themselves so much. He forthwith wrote his name on each of those questions, so that it will be remembered as long as they are remembered.

Nor is it merely on these few measures that Sir Robert Peel's mind must undoubtedly have undergone

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a change. The lifetime of few Englishmen has been more exactly commensurate with a change of public opinion, — a total revolution of political thought. Hardly any fact in history is so incredible as that forty and a few years ago England was ruled by Mr. Perceval: it seems almost the same as being ruled by the *Record* newspaper, — he had the same poorness of thought, the same petty Conservatism, the same dark and narrow superstition. His quibbling mode of oratory seems to have been scarcely agreeable to his friends; his impotence in political speculation moves the wrath, destroys the patience of the quietest reader now. Other ministers have had great connections or great estates, to compensate for the contractedness of their minds: Mr. Perceval was only a poorish *nisi prius* lawyer, and there is no kind of human being so disagreeable, so teasing to the gross Tory nature. He is not entitled to any glory for our warlike successes; on the contrary, he did his best to obtain failure by starving the Duke of Wellington and plaguing him with petty vexations. His views in religion inclined to that Sabbatarian superstition which is of all creeds the most alien to the firm and genial English nature. The mere fact of such a premier being endured shows how deeply the whole national spirit and interest was absorbed in the contest with Napoleon, how little we understood the sort of man who should regulate its conduct, — "in the crisis of Europe," as Sydney Smith said, "he safely brought the Curates' Salaries Improvement Bill to a hearing," *— and it still more shows the horror of all innovation which the recent events of French history had impressed on our wealthy and comfortable classes: they were afraid of catching revolution as old women of catching cold. Sir Archibald Alison to this day holds that revolution is an infectious

*I suppose this refers to the following in Letter iv. of "Plymley": — "If this combination [of the North-Irish Dissenters with the Catholics] does take place, . . . the death blow of England is struck; and this event may happen *instantly*, — before . . . Mr. Perceval [has] conducted the Curates' Salary Bill safely to a third reading." — Ed.

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disease, beginning no one knows how and going no one knows where; there is but one rule of escape, explains the great historian: Stay still, don't move; do what you have been accustomed to do, and consult your grandmother on everything. In 1812 the English people were all persuaded of this theory; Mr. Perceval was the most narrow-minded and unaltering man they could find: he therefore represented their spirit, and they put him at the head of the state.

Such was the state of political questions. How little of real thoughtfulness was then applied to what we now call "social questions" cannot be better illustrated than by the proceedings on the occasion of Mr. Perceval's death. Bellingham, who killed him, was, whether punishable or not, as clearly insane as a lunatic can be who offends against the laws of his country. He had no idea of killing Mr. Perceval particularly: his only idea was, that he had lost some property in Russia [and] that the English government would never repay him his loss in Russia; and he endeavored to find some Cabinet minister to shoot as a compensation. Lord Eldon lived under the belief that he had nearly been the victim himself, and told some story of a borrowed hat and an assistant's great-coat to which he ascribed his preservation.* The whole affair was a monomaniac's delusion: Bellingham had no ground for expecting any repayment; there was no reason for ascribing his pecuniary ruin to the Government of that day any more than to the Government of this day. Indeed, if he had been alive now, it would have been agreed that he was a particularly estimable man: medical gentlemen would have been examined for days on the doctrine of "irresistible impulse," "moral insanity," "instinctive pistol discharges," and every respectful sympathy would have been shown to so curious an offender. Whether he was punishable or not may be a question; but all will now agree that it was not a case for the punishment

*In his "Anecdote Book"; quoted in Twiss's "Life," Chap. xxxiii.

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of death. In that day there was no more doubt that he ought to be hanged than there would now be that he ought on no account to be hanged. The serious reasons—of which the scientific theories above alluded to are but the exaggerated resemblance—which indicate the horrible cruelty of inflicting on those who do not know what they do, the extreme penalty of suffering meant for those who perpetrate the worst they can conceive, are in these years so familiar that we can hardly conceive their being unknown: yet the Tory historian has to regret "that the motion made and earnestly insisted on by his counsel, to have the trial postponed for some days, to obtain evidence from a distance to establish his insanity, was not acceded to; that a judicial proceeding, requiring beyond all others the most calm and deliberate consideration, should have been hurried over with a precipitance which, if not illegal, was at least unusual;"* and a noble lord† "improved" the moment of the assassination by exclaiming to the peers in Opposition, "You see, my lords, the consequence of your agitating the question of *Catholic emancipation.*"‡ To those who now know England, it seems scarcely possible that this could have occurred here only forty-four years since. It was in such a world that Sir Robert Peel commenced his career: he was Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies at the time of Mr. Perceval's assassination.

It is not, however, to be imagined that even if Mr. Perceval had lived, his power would have very long endured. It passed to milder and quieter men; it passed to such men as Lord Liverpool and Mr. Peel. The ruling power at that time in England, as for many years before, as even in some measure (though far less) now, was the class of aristocratic gentry; by which we do not mean to denote only the aristocracy and do not mean to exclude the aristocracy, but to

* Alison's "History of Europe," Chap. lxiv.

† Lord Ross, previously Sir Lawrence Parsons.

‡ Taylor's "Life and Times of Peel," Chap. v.

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indicate the great class of hereditary landed proprietors, who are in sympathy with the House of Lords on cardinal points, yet breathe a somewhat freer air, are more readily acted on by the opinion of the community, more contradictable by the lower herd, and less removed from their prejudices by a refined and regulated education. From the time of the Revolution, more or less, this has been the ruling class in the community; the close-borough system and the county system giving them mainly the control of the House of Commons, and their feeling being in general, as it were, a mean term between those of the higher nobility and the trading public of what were then the few large towns. The rule of the House of Lords was rather mediate than direct. By those various means of influence and social patronage and oppression which are familiar to a wealthy and high-bred aristocracy, the highest members of it, of course, did exercise over all below them a sure and continual influence: it worked silently and commonly on ordinary questions and in quiet times; yet it was liable to be overborne by a harsher and ruder power when stormy passions arose, in the days of wars and tumults. So far as the actual selection of visible rulers goes, the largest amount of administrative power has rarely been in the hands of the highest aristocracy, and in a great measure for a peculiar reason: that aristocracy rarely will do the work and rarely can do the work. The enormous pressure of daily growing business which besets the governors of a busy and complicated community is too much for the refined habits, delicate discrimination, anxious judgment which the course of their life develops in the highest classes, and with which it nourishes the indolence natural to those who have this world to enjoy. The real strain of the necessary labor has generally been borne by men of a somewhat lower grade, trained by an early ambition, a native aptitude, a hardy competition, to perform its copious tasks. Such men are partakers of two benefits:

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they are rough and ready enough to accomplish the coarse, enormous daily work; they have lived with men of higher rank enough to know and feel what such persons think and want. Sir Robert Walpole is the type of this class. He was a Norfolk squire, and not a nobleman; he was bred a gentleman, and yet was quite coarse enough for any business: his career was what you would expect, — for very many years he administered the government much as the aristocracy wished and desired. *They* were, so to speak, the directors of the company which is called the English nation; they met a little and talked a little: but Sir Robert was the manager, who knew all the facts, came every day, saw everybody, and was everything.

Passing over the time of Lord Liverpool, of whom this is not now the place to speak, some such destiny as this would, in his first political life, have appeared likely to be that of Sir Robert Peel. If an acute master of the betting art had been asked the "favorite" statesman who was likely to rule in that generation, he would undoubtedly have selected Sir Robert: he was rich, decorous, laborious, and had devoted himself regularly to the task; there was no other such man. It was likely, at least to superficial observers, that his name would descend to posterity as the "Sir Robert" of a new time; a time changed indeed from that of Walpole, but resembling it in its desire to be ruled by a great administrator, skillful in all kinds of business transactions yet associated with the aristocracy, — by one unremarkable in his opinions but remarkable in his powers. The fates, however, designed Peel for a very different destiny: and to a really close observer there were signs in his horoscope which should have clearly revealed it. Sir Robert's father and grandfather were two of the men who created Lancashire. No sooner did the requisite machinery issue from the brain of the inventor than its capabilities were seized on by strong, ready, bold men of business, who erected it, used it, devised a

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factory system, combined a factory population, — created, in a word, that black industrial region of whose augmenting wealth and horrid labor, tales are daily borne to the genial and lazy South. Of course it cannot be said that mill-makers invented the middle classes, — the history of England perhaps shows that it has not for centuries been without an unusual number of persons with comfortable and moderate means; but though this class has ever been found among us, and has ever been more active than in any other similar country, yet to a great extent it was scattered, headless, motionless. Small rural out-of-the-way towns, country factories few and far between, concealed and divided this great and mixed mass of petty means and steady intelligence. The huge heaps of manufacturing wealth were not to be concealed; they at once placed on a level with the highest in the land — in matters of expenditure, and in those countless social relations which depend upon expenditure — men sprung from the body of the people, unmistakably speaking its language, inevitably thinking its thoughts. It is true that the first manufacturers were not democratic; Sir Robert Peel, the statesman's father, a type of the class, was a firm, honest, domineering Conservative: but however on such topics they may so think, however on other topics they may try to catch the language of the class to which they rise, the grain of the middle class will surely show itself in those who have risen from the middle class. If Mr. Cobden were to go over to the enemy, if he were to offer to serve Lord Derby *vice* Disraeli disconcerted, it would not be possible for him to speak as the hereditary land-owner speaks. It is not that the hereditary land-owner knows more: indeed, either in book-learning or in matters of observation, in acquaintance with what has been or is going to be or what now is, the owners of rent are not superior to the receivers of profits; yet their dialect is different, — the one speaks

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the language of years of toil, and the other of years of indolence. A harsh laboriousness characterizes the one, a pleasant geniality the other. The habit of industry is ingrained in those who have risen by it; it modifies every word and qualifies every notion: they are the *βάνανσοι** of work. Vainly, therefore, did the first manufacturers struggle to be Conservatives, to be baronets, to be peers: the titles they might obtain, their outward existence they might change, themselves in a manner they might alter; but a surer force was dragging them and those who resembled them into another region, filling them with other thoughts, making them express what people of the middle classes had always obscurely felt, pushing forward this new industrial order by the side or even in front of the old aristocratic order. The new class have not indeed shown themselves republican; they have not especially cared to influence the machinery of government: their peculiarity has been, that they wished to see the government administered according to the notions familiar to them in their business life. They have no belief in mystery or magic; probably they have never appreciated the political influence of the imagination: they wish to see plain sense applied to the most prominent part of practical life. In his later career, the second Sir Robert Peel was the statesman who most completely and thoroughly expressed the sentiments of this new dynasty; instead of being the nominee of a nobility, he became the representative of a transacting and trading multitude.

Both of these two classes were, however, equally possessed by the vice or tendency we commented on at the outset: they each of them desired to see the government carried on exactly according to their own views. The idea on which seems to rest our only chance of again seeing great statesmen — of

* "Mechanics." A reference to Aristotle's argument ("Politica," iii. 5) that trade and handicrafts imply sordid dispositions and narrow minds. He says *βάνανσοι* "cannot practice virtue!" — ED.

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placing deep deferential trust in those who have given real proofs of comprehensive sagacity — had scarcely dawned on either. The average man had, so to say, varied, — he was no longer of the one order, but of an inferior; but he was not at all less exacting or tyrannical, — perhaps he was even more so, for the indolent gentleman is less absolute and domineering than the active man of business. However that may be, it was the fate of Sir Robert Peel, in the two phases of his career, to take a leading share in carrying out the views, in administering the creed, first of one and then of the other.

Perhaps in our habitual estimate of Peel we hardly enough bear this in mind. We remember him as the guiding chief of the most intelligent Conservative Government that this country has ever seen; we remember the great legislative acts which we owe to his trained capacity, every detail of which bears the impress of his practiced hand; we know that his name is pronounced with applause in the great marts of trade and seats of industry, that even yet it is muttered with reproach in the obscure abodes of squires and rectors. We forget that his name was once the power of the Protestant interest, the shibboleth by which squires and rectors distinguished those whom they loved from those whom they hated; we forget that he defended the Manchester massacre,* the Six Acts,† the Imposition of Tests, the rule of Orangemen. We remember Peel as the proper head of a moderate, intelligent, half-commercial community; we forget that he once was the chosen representative of a gentry untrained to great affairs, absorbed in a great war, only just recovering from the horror of a great revolution.

In truth, the character of Sir Robert Peel happily fitted him both to be the chosen head of a popular community imperiously bent on its own ideas, and to be the head of that community in shifting and

*Of Aug. 16, 1819: "Peterloo." †See note to Vol. ii., page 269.

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changing times. Sir Robert was at Harrow with Lord Byron, who has left the characteristic reminiscence, "I was always in scrapes, and he never;"* and opposed as they were in their fortunes as boys and men, they were at least equally contrasted in the habit and kind of action of their minds. Lord Byron's mind gained everything it was to gain by one intense, striking effort: by a blow of the imagination he elicited a single bright spark of light on every subject, and that was all; and this he never lost, — the intensity of the thinking seemed to burn it on the memory, there to remain alone. But he made no second effort; he gained no more. He always avowed his incapability of continuous application: he could not, he said, learn the grammar of any language. In later life he showed considerable talent for action; but those who had to act with him observed that versatile as were his talents, and mutable as his convictions had always seemed to be, in reality he was the most stubborn of men. He heard what you had to say, assented to all you had to say, and the next morning returned to his original opinion. No amount of ordinary argumentative resistance was so hopeless as that facile acquiescence and instantaneous recurrence. The truth was, that he was — and some others are similarly constituted — unable to retain anything which he did not at any rate *seem* to gain by the unaided single rush of his own mind. The ideas of such minds are often not new, very often they are hardly in the strictest sense original; they really were very much suggested from without, and preserved in some obscure corner of memory, out of the way and unknown: but it remains their characteristic, that they seem to the mind of the thinker to be born from its own depths, to be the product of its latent forces. There is a kind of eruption of ideas from a subter-conscious world; the whole mental action is volcanic. The lava flood

* Undated memorandum published in his works.

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glows in "Childe Harold"; all the thoughts are intense, flung forth vivid. The day after the eruption the mind is calm; it seems as if it could not again do the like: the product only remains, distinct, peculiar, indestructible. The mind of Peel was the exact opposite of this: his opinions far more resembled the daily accumulating insensible deposits of a rich alluvial soil. The great stream of time flows on with all things on its surface; and slowly, grain by grain, a mold of wise experience is unconsciously left on the still, extended intellect. You scarcely think of such a mind as acting: it seems always acted upon. There is no trace of gushing, overpowering, spontaneous impulse: everything seems acquired; the thoughts are calm. In Lord Byron, the very style — dashing, free, incisive — shows the bold impulse from which it came; the stealthy accumulating words of Peel seem like the quiet leavings of an outward tendency, which brought these but might as well have brought others. There is no peculiar stamp, either, in the ideas: they might have been any one's ideas; they belong to the general diffused stock of observations which are to be found in the civilized world. They are not native to the particular mind, nor "to the manner born"*; like a science, they are credible or incredible by all men equally. This *secondary* order, as we may call it, of intellect, is evidently most useful to a statesman of the constitutional class, such as we have described him. He insensibly and inevitably takes in and imbibes, by means of it, the ideas of those around him: if he were left in a vacuum, he would have no ideas. The primary class of mind that strikes out its own belief would here be utterly at fault: it would want something which other men had, it would discover something which other men would not understand. Sir Robert Peel was a statesman for forty years; under our Constitution, Lord Byron, eminent as was his insight into

*"Hamlet," i. 4.

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men, and remarkable as was his power (at least for short periods) of dealing with them, would not have been a statesman for forty days.

It is very likely that many people may not think Sir Robert Peel's mind so interesting as Lord Byron's; they may prefer the self-originating intellect, which invents and retains its own ideas, to the calm receptive intellect which acquires its belief from without. The answer lies in what has been said: a constitutional statesman must sympathize in the ideas of the many; as the many change, it will be his good fortune if he can contrive to change with them. It is to be remembered that statesmen do not live under hermetical seals: like other men, they are influenced by the opinions of other men; how potent is this influence, those best know who have tried to hold ideas different from the ideas of those around.

In another point of view also Sir Robert Peel's character was exactly fitted to the position we have delineated: he was a great administrator. Civilization requires this. In a simple age, work may be difficult, but it is scarce; there are fewer people, and everybody wants fewer things; the mere tools of civilization seem in some sort to augment work. In early times, when a despot wishes to govern a distant province, he sends down a satrap on a grand horse, with other people on little horses; and very little is heard of the satrap again unless he send back some of the little people to tell what he has been doing. No great labor of superintendence is possible; common rumor and casual complaints are the sources of intelligence. If it seems certain that the province is in a bad state, satrap No. 1 is recalled and satrap No. 2 is sent out in his stead. In civilized countries the whole thing is different: you erect a bureau in the province you want to govern, you make it write letters and copy letters; it sends home eight reports *per diem* to the head bureau in St. Petersburg; nobody does a sum in the province without somebody doing

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the same sum in the capital, to "check him" and see that he does it correctly. The consequence of this is, to throw on the heads of departments an amount of reading and labor which can only be accomplished by the greatest natural aptitude, the most efficient training, the most firm and regular industry. Under a free government it is by no means better; perhaps in some respects it is worse. It is true that many questions which under the French despotism are referred to Paris, are settled in England on the very spot where they are to be done, without reference to London at all: but as a set-off, a constitutional administrator has to be always consulting others, finding out what this man or that man chooses to think; learning which form of error is believed by Lord B, which by Lord C; adding up the errors of the alphabet, and seeing what portion of what he thinks he ought to do they will all of them together allow him to do. Likewise, though the personal freedom and individual discretion which free governments allow to their subjects seem at first likely to diminish the work which those governments have to do, it may be doubted whether it does so really and in the end,—individual discretion strikes out so many more pursuits, and some supervision must be maintained over each of those pursuits. No despotic government would consider the police force of London enough to keep down, watch, and superintend such a population; but then, no despotic government would have such a city as London to keep down. The freedom of growth allows the possibility of growth; and though liberal governments take so much less in proportion upon them, yet the scale of operations is so much enlarged by the continual exercise of civil liberty, that the real work is ultimately perhaps as immense,—while a despotic government is regulating ten per cent. of ten men's actions, a free government has to regulate one per cent. of a hundred men's actions. The difficulty, too, increases. Anybody can understand a rough

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despotic community,— a small buying class of nobles, a small selling class of traders, a large producing class of serfs, are much the same in all quarters of the globe: but a free intellectual community is a complicated network of ramified relations, interlacing and passing hither and thither, old and new; some of fine city weaving, others of gross agricultural construction. You are never sure what effect any force or any change may produce on a framework so exquisite and so involved. Govern it as you may, it will be a work of great difficulty, labor, and responsibility; and no man who is thus occupied ought ever to go to bed without reflecting that from the difficulty of his employment, he may probably enough have that day done more evil than good. What view Sir Robert Peel took of these duties, he has himself informed us.

"Take the case of the Prime Minister. You must presume that he reads every important dispatch from every foreign court. He cannot consult with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and exercise the influence which he ought to have with respect to the conduct of foreign affairs, unless he be master of everything of real importance passing in that department. It is the same with respect to other departments, — India, for instance: how can the Prime Minister be able to judge of the course of policy with regard to India, unless he be cognizant of all the current important correspondence? In the case of Ireland and the Home Department it is the same. Then the Prime Minister has the patronage of the Crown to exercise, — which you say, and justly say, is of so much importance and of so much value: he has to make inquiries into the qualifications of the persons who are candidates; he has to conduct the whole of the communications with the sovereign; he has to write, probably with his own hand, the letters in reply to all persons of station who address themselves to him; he has to receive deputations on public business; during the sitting of Parliament he is expected to attend six or seven hours a day, while Parliament is sitting, for four or five days in the week, — at least he is blamed if he is absent."*

The necessary effect of all this labor is, that those subject to it have no opinions. It requires a great

*I cannot find this anywhere. — ED.

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deal of time to have opinions; belief is a slow process; that leisure which the poets say is necessary to be good or to be wise is needful for the humbler task of allowing respectable maxims to take root respectably. The "wise passiveness" of Mr. Wordsworth* is necessary in very ordinary matters: if you chain a man's head to a ledger, and keep him constantly adding up, and take a pound off his salary whenever he stops, you can't expect him to have a sound conviction on Catholic emancipation or tithes, and original ideas on the Transcaucasian provinces. Our system, indeed, seems expressly provided to make it unlikely. The most benumbing thing to the intellect is routine; the most bewildering is distraction: our system is a distracting routine. You see this in the description just given, which is not exhaustive. Sir Robert Peel once requested to have a number of questions carefully written down which they asked him one day in succession in the House of Commons: they seemed a list of everything that could occur in the British Empire or to the brain of a member of Parliament. A premier's whole life is a series of such transitions: it is wonderful that our public men have any minds left, rather than that a certain unfixity of opinion seems growing upon them.

We may go further on this subject. A great administrator is not a man likely to desire to have fixed opinions,—his natural bent and tendency is to immediate action: the existing and pressing circumstances of the case fill up his mind; the letters to be answered, the documents to be filed, the memoranda to be made, engross his attention; he is angry if you distract him. A bold person who suggests a matter of principle, or a difficulty of thought, or an abstract result that seems improbable in the case "before the board," will be set down as a speculator, a theorist, a troubler of practical life. To expect to hear from such men profound views of future policy, digested

* "Expostulation and Reply."

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plans of distant action, is to mistake their genius entirely: it is like asking the broker of the Stock Exchange what will be the price of the funds this day six months; his whole soul is absorbed in thinking what that price will be in ten minutes, — a momentary change of an eighth is more important to him than a distant change of a hundred eighths. So the brain of a great administrator is naturally occupied with the details of the day, the passing dust, the granules of that day's life; and his unforeseeing temperament turns away uninterested from reaching speculations, from vague thought, and from extensive and far-off plans. Of course it is not meant that a great administrator has absolutely no general views: some indeed he must have, — a man cannot conduct the detail of affairs without having some plan which regulates that detail; he cannot help having some idea, vague or accurate, indistinct or distinct, of the direction in which he is going and the purpose for which he is traveling. But the difference is, that this plan is seldom his own, the offspring of his own brain, the result of his own mental contention; it is the plan of some one else. Providence generally bestows on the working adaptive man a quiet adoptive nature; he receives insensibly the suggestions of others, he hears them with willing ears, he accepts them with placid belief. An acquiescent credulity is a quality of such men's nature: they cannot help being sure that what every one says must be true; the *vox populi* is a part of their natural religion. It has been made a matter of wonder that Peel should have belonged to the creed of Mr. Perceval and Lord Sidmouth. Perhaps, indeed, our existing psychology will hardly explain the process by which a decorous young man acquires the creed of his era: he assumes its belief as he assumes its costume; he imitates the respectable classes; he avoids an original opinion like an *outré* coat, a new idea like an unknown tie. Especially he does so on matters of real concern to

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him, on those on which he knows he must act. He acquiesces in the creed of the orthodox agents; he scarcely considers for himself; he acknowledges the apparent authority of dignified experience. He is, he remembers, but the junior partner in the firm; it does not occur to him to doubt that those were right who were occupied in its management years before him. In this way he acquires an experience which more independent and original minds are apt to want. There was a great cry when the Whigs came into office, at the time of the Reform Bill, that they were not men of business. Of course, after a very long absence from office, they could not possess a technical acquaintance with official forms, a trained facility in official action; this Sir Robert Peel acquired from his apprenticeship to Mr. Perceval. His early connection with the narrow Conservative party has been considered a disadvantage to him; but it may well be doubted whether his peculiar mind was not more improved by the administrative training than impaired by the contact with prejudiced thoughts. He never could have been a great thinker; he became what nature designed, a great agent.

In a third respect also Sir Robert Peel conformed to the type of a constitutional statesman; and that third respect also seems naturally to lead to a want of defined principle and to apparent fluctuation of opinion. He was a great debater; and of all pursuits ever invented by man for separating the faculty of argument from the capacity of belief, the art of debating is probably the most effectual. Mr. Macaulay tells us that in his opinion this is

> "the most serious of the evils which are to be set off against the many blessings of popular government. The keenest and most vigorous minds of every generation, minds often admirably fitted for the investigation of truth, are habitually employed in producing arguments such as no man of sense would ever put into a treatise intended for publication, — arguments which are just good enough to be used once, when aided by fluent delivery and pointed language.

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The habit of discussing questions in this way necessarily reacts on the intellects of our ablest men, particularly of those who are introduced into Parliament at a very early age, before their minds have expanded to full maturity. The talent for debate is developed in such men to a degree which, to the multitude, seems as marvelous as the performance of an Italian *improvvisatore;* but they are fortunate indeed if they retain unimpaired the faculties which are required for close reasoning or for enlarged speculation. Indeed, we should sooner expect a great original work on political science — such a work, for example, as the 'Wealth of Nations' — from an apothecary in a country town, or from a minister in the Hebrides, than from a statesman who, ever since he was one-and-twenty, had been a distinguished debater in the House of Commons."*

But it may well be doubted whether there is not in the same pursuit a deeper evil, hard to eradicate, and tending to corrupt and destroy the minds of those who are beneath its influence. Constitutional statesmen are obliged not only to employ arguments which they do not think conclusive, but likewise to defend opinions which they do not believe to be true. Whether we approve it or lament it, there is no question that our existing political life is deeply marked by the habit of advocacy. Perhaps fifteen measures may annually, on an average, be brought in by a Cabinet Government of fifteen persons: it is impossible to believe that all members of that Cabinet agree in all those measures, — no two people agree in fifteen things, fifteen clever men never yet agreed in anything; yet they all defend them, argue for them, are responsible for them. It is always quite possible that the minister who is strenuously defending a bill in the House of Commons may have used in the Cabinet the very arguments which the Opposition are using in the House; he may have been overruled without being convinced; he may still think the conclusions he opposes better than those which he inculcates. It is idle to say that he ought to go out; at least it amounts to saying that government by means of a Cabinet is impossible. The object of a committee of

* "Gladstone on Church and State."

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that kind is to agree on certain conclusions; if every member after the meeting were to start off according to the individual bent and bias of his mind, according to his own individual discretion or indiscretion, the previous concurrence would have become childish. Of course the actual measure proposed by the collective voice of several persons is very different from what any one of these persons would of himself wish; it is the result of a compromise between them. Each, perhaps, has obtained some concession; each has given up something. Every one sees in the actual proposal something of which he strongly disapproves; every one regrets the absence of something which he much desires. Yet on the whole, perhaps, he thinks the measure better than no measure; or at least he thinks that if he went out, it would break up the Government, and imagines it to be of more consequence that the Government should be maintained than that the particular measure should be rejected: he concedes his individual judgment. No one has laid this down with more distinctness than Sir Robert Peel:—

"Supposing a person at a dinner-table to express his private opinion of a measure originating with a party with whom he is united in public life, is he, in the event of his giving up that private opinion out of deference to his party, to be exposed to a charge almost amounting to dishonesty? The idea is absurd. What is the every-day conduct of government itself? Is there any one in this House so ignorant as to suppose that on all questions, Cabinet ministers who yield to the decision of their colleagues speak and act in Parliament in strict conformity with the opinions they have expressed in the Cabinet? If ministers are to be taunted on every occasion that they hold opinions in the Cabinet different from what they do in this House, and if Parliament is to be made the scene of those taunts, I believe I should not be going too far in saying the House would have time for little else. It is the uniform practice with all Governments, and I should be sorry to think the practice carries any stain with it, for a member of the administration who chances to entertain opinions differing from those of the majority of his colleagues, rather than separate himself from them,

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to submit to be overruled, and even though he do not fully concur in their policy, to give his support to the measures which, as an administration, they promulgate. I will give the House an instance of this fact. It was very generally reported on a late occasion, that upon the question of sending troops to Portugal a strong difference of opinion took place in the Cabinet. Now, would it, I ask, be either just or fair to call on those who, in the discussion of the Cabinet, had spoken in favor of sending out troops to aid the cause of Donna Maria, to come down, and in Parliament advocate that measure in opposition to the decision of their colleagues? No one would think of doing so." *

It may not carry a stain; but it is a painful idea.

It is evident, too, that this necessarily leads to great apparent changes of opinion; to the professed belief of a statesman at one moment being utterly different from what it seems to be at another moment. When a Government is founded, questions A, B, C, D, E, F are the great questions of the day, the matters which are obvious, pressing, which the public mind comprehends; X, Y, Z are in the background, little thought of, obscure. According to the received morality, no statesman would hesitate to sacrifice the last to the first; he might have a very strong personal opinion on X, but he would surrender it to a colleague as the price of his co-operation on A or B. A few years afterwards times change: question A is carried, B settles itself, E and F are forgotten, X becomes the most important topic of the day. The statesman who conceded X before, now feels that he no longer can concede it, — there is no equivalent. He has never in reality changed his opinion, yet he has to argue in favor of the very measures which he endeavored before to argue against. Everybody thinks he has changed; and without going into details the secrecy of which is esteemed essential to confidential co-operation, it is impossible that he can evince his consistency. It is impossible to doubt that this

* Speech of Feb. 10, 1834, on the charge in a previous speech that some Irish members who voted and spoke against the Coercion Bill had privately urged the ministers not to modify it. — ED.

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is a very serious evil; and it is plainly one consequent on, or much exaggerated by, a popular and argumentative government. It is very possible for a conscientious man, under a bureaucratic government, to co-operate with the rest of a council in the elaboration and execution of measures many of which he thinks inexpedient: nobody asks him his opinion; he has not to argue or defend or persuade. But a free government boasts that it is carried on in the face of day; its principle is discussion, its habit is debate: the consequence is, that those who conduct it have to defend measures they disapprove, to object to measures they approve, to appear to have an accurate opinion on points on which they really have no opinion. The calling of a constitutional statesman is very much that of a political advocate: he receives a new brief with the changing circumstances of each successive day. It is easy to conceive a cold, sardonic intellect, moved with contempt at such a life, casting aside the half-and-half pretenses with which others partly deceive themselves; stating anything; preserving an intellectual preference for truth, but regarding any effort at its special advocacy as the weak aim of foolish men, striving for what they cannot attain: Lord Lyndhurst has shown us that it is possible to lead the life of Lord Lyndhurst. One can conceive, too, a cold and somewhat narrow intellect, capable of forming in any untroubled scene an accurate plain conviction, but without much power of entering into the varying views of others; little skilled in diversified argument; understanding its own opinion and not understanding the opinions of others, — one can imagine such a mind pained and cracked and shattered by endeavoring to lead a life of ostentatious argument in favor of others' opinions, of half-concealment of its chill unaltering essence: it will be for posterity to make due allowance for the variance between the character and the position of Lord John Russell.

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Sir Robert Peel was exactly fit for this life. The word which exactly fits his oratory is "specious": he hardly ever said anything which struck you in a moment to be true, he never uttered a sentence which for a moment anybody could deny to be plausible. Once, when they were opposed on a railway bill, the keen irascibility of Lord Derby stimulated him to observe that "*no one* knew like the right honorable baronet how to *dress up* a case for that House."* The art of statement, the power of detail, the watching for the weak points of an opponent, an average style adapting itself equally to what the speaker believed and what he disbelieved, a business air, a didactic precision for what it was convenient to make clear, an unctuous disguise of flowing periods and "a deep sense of responsibility" for what it was convenient to conceal, an enormous facility, made Sir Robert Peel a nearly unequaled master of the art of political advocacy; for his times he was perhaps quite unequaled. He might have failed in times of deep, outpouring patriotic excitement, — he had not nature enough to express it; he might have failed in an age when there was nothing to do, and when elegant personality and the *finesse* of artistic expression were of all things most required: but for an age of important business, when there were an unusual number of great topics to be discussed, but none great enough to hurry men away from their business habits or awaken the most ardent passion or the highest imagination, there is nothing like the oratory of Peel, — able but not aspiring, firm but not exalted, never great but ever adequate to great affairs. It is curious to know that he was trained to the trade.

"Soon after Peel was born, his father, the first baronet, finding himself rising daily in wealth and consequence, and believing that money in those peculiar days could always command a seat in Parliament, determined to bring up his son expressly for the House of Commons. When that son was quite a child, Sir Robert would

* Stafford & Rugby Railway Bill, March 17, 1841; a rough quotation, whose wording shows that it was taken second-hand from Tooke's "History of Prices," Vol. iv., Chap. ii., § 14. — ED.

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frequently set him on the table and say, 'Now, Robin, make a speech, and I will give you this cherry.' What few words the little fellow produced were applauded; and applause, stimulating exertion, produced such effects that before Robin was ten years old he could really address the company with some degree of eloquence. As he grew up, his father constantly took him every Sunday into his private room, and made him repeat as well as he could the sermon which had been preached. Little progress in effecting this was made, and little was expected, *at first;* but by steady perseverance the habit of attention grew powerful, and the sermon was repeated almost *verbatim.* When at a very distant day the senator, remembering accurately the speech of an opponent, answered his arguments in correct succession, it was little known that the power of so doing was originally acquired in Drayton Church."*

A mischievous observer might say that something else had remained to Sir Robert Peel from these sermons: his tone is a trifle sermonic. He failed where perhaps alone Lord John Russell has succeeded, — in the oratory of conviction.

If we bear in mind the whole of these circumstances: if we picture in our minds a nature at once active and facile; easily acquiring its opinions from without, not easily devising them from within; a large placid adaptive intellect, devoid of irritable intense originality, prone to forget the ideas of yesterday, inclined to accept the ideas of to-day: if we imagine a man so formed, cast early into absorbing, exhausting industry of detail, with work enough to fill up a life, with action of itself enough to render speculation almost impossible; placed too in a position unsuited to abstract thought, [and] of which the conventions and rules require that a man should feign other men's thoughts, should impugn his own opinions, — we shall begin to imagine a conscientious man destitute of convictions on the occupations of his life, to comprehend the character of Sir Robert Peel.

That Sir Robert was a very conscientious man is quite certain; it is even probable that he had a morbid

* From the Dean of York's "Memoir" (see page 32, note). Sir Lawrence Peel in his memoir contradicts the story flatly. — ED.

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sense of administrative responsibility. We do not say that he was so weighed down as Lord Liverpool, who is alleged never to have opened his letters without a pang of foreboding that something had miscarried somewhere; but every testimony agrees that Sir Robert had an anxious sense of duty in detail. Lord Wellesley, somewhere in this volume, on an occasion when it would have been at least equally natural to speak of "administrative capacity" and "efficient co-operation," mentions only "the real impressions which your kindness and high character have fixed in my mind."* The circumstances of his end naturally produced a crowd of tributes to his memory, and hardly any of them omit his deep sense of the obligations of action. The characteristic, too, is written conspicuously on every line of these memoirs: disappointing and external as in some respects they seem, they all the more evidently bear witness to this trait. They read like the conscientious letters of an ordinary practical man; the great statesman has little other notion than that it is his duty to transact his business well. As a conspicuous merit, the Duke of Wellington, oddly enough according to some people's notions at the time, selected Peel's veracity: — "In the whole course of my communication with him, I had never known an instance in which he did not show the strictest preference for truth. I never had, in the whole course of my life, the slightest reason for suspecting that he stated anything that he did not firmly believe to be the fact. I could not sit down without stating what I believe, after a long acquaintance, to have been his most striking characteristic."† Simple people in the country were a little astonished to hear so strong a eulogy on a man for not telling lies: they were under the impression that people in general did not. But those who have considered the tempting nature of a

* Letter to Peel, Jan. 30, 1828.

† In the House of Lords on occasion of his death: Taylor's "Life and Times of Peel," concluding chapter.

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statesman's pursuits, the secrets of office, the inevitable complication of his personal relations, will not be surprised that many statesmen should be without veracity, or that one should be eulogized for possessing it. It is to be remarked, however, in mitigation of so awful an excellence, that Sir Robert was seldom "in scrapes," and that it is on those occasions that the virtue of veracity is apt to be most severely tested; the same remark is applicable to the well-praised truthfulness of the Duke himself.

In conjunction with the great soldier, Sir Robert Peel is entitled to the fame of a great act of administrative conscience: he purified the Tory party. There is little doubt that during the long and secure reign which the Tories enjoyed about the beginning of the century, there was much of the corruption naturally incident to a strong party with many adherents to provide for, uncontrolled by an effective Opposition, unwatched by a great nation. Of course, too, any Government remaining over from the last century would inevitably have adhering to it various *remanet* corruptions of that curious epoch: there flourished those mighty sinecures and reversions, a few of which still remain to be the wonder and envy of an unenjoying generation. The House of Commons was not difficult then to manage: there is a legend that a distinguished Treasury official of the last century,* a very capable man, used to say of any case which was hopelessly and inevitably bad, "Ah, we must apply our majority to this question;" and no argument is so effectual as the mechanical, calculable suffrage of a strong, unreasoning party. There were doubtless many excellent men in the Tory party, even in its least excellent days; but the two men to whom the party as such owes most of purification were the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel. From the

* George Rose, now forgotten and dropped out of most cyclopædias. See Allibone.— ED.

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time when they became responsible for the management of a Conservative Government, there was no doubt, in office or in the nation, that the public money and patronage were administered by men whom no consideration would induce to use either for their personal benefit; and who would, as far as their whole power lay, discourage and prevent the corrupt use of either by others. The process by which they succeeded in conveying this impression is illustrated by a chapter in the Dean of York's* "Memoir of Peel,"† in which that well-known dignitary recounts the temptations which he applied to the political purity of his relative:—

"While Peel was Secretary for Ireland, I asked him to give a very trifling situation, nominally in his gift, to a worthy person for whom I felt an interest. He wrote me word that he was really anxious to oblige me in this matter, but that a nobleman of much parliamentary interest, who supported the Government, insisted upon his right to dispose of all patronage in his own neighborhood. So anxious was Peel to show his good-will towards me, that he prevailed upon the Lord Lieutenant to ask as a favor from the aforesaid nobleman that the situation might be given to my nominee; but the marquis replied that the situation was of no value, yet to prevent a dangerous precedent he must refuse the application.

"In times long after, when Sir Robert Peel became Prime Minister, I asked him often in the course of many years for situations for my sons, which situations were vacant and in his immediate gift. I subjoin three letters which I received from him on these subjects; they were written after long intervals and at different periods, but they all speak the same language:—

WHITEHALL, Dec. 20 (no date of year).

MY DEAR DEAN OF YORK,—I thank you for your consideration of what you deem the unrequited sacrifice which I make in the public service. But I beg to say that my chief consolation and reward is the *consciousness* that my exertions are disinterested,—that I have considered official patronage as a public trust, to be applied

* William Cockburn, D. D., who married Peel's sister Elizabeth.—ED.

† In *Colburn's New Monthly* of December, 1850, and January, 1851; reprinted in *Littell's Living Age* of Nov. 1, 1851. Curiously, it is not alluded to by Allibone either under Peel or Cockburn; and a question in *Notes and Queries* of August, 1859, as to memoirs of Peel, elicited no mention of it.—ED.

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to the reward and encouragement of public service, or to the less praiseworthy but still necessary purpose of promoting the general interests of the Government. That patronage is so wholly inadequate to meet the fair claims of a public nature that are daily presented for my consideration, and that constitute the chief torment of office, that I can only overcome the difficulties connected with the distribution by the utmost forbearance as to deriving any personal advantage from it. If I had absolute control over the appointment to which you refer, I should apply it to the satisfaction of one or other of the engagements into which I entered when I formed the Government, and which (from the absolute want of means) remain unfulfilled. But I have informed the numerous parties who have applied to me on the subject of that appointment that I feel it to be my duty, on account of the present condition of the board and the functions they have to perform, to select for it some experienced man of business connected with the naval profession, or some man distinguished in that profession.

Believe me, my dear Dean, affectionately yours,

ROBERT PEEL.

"I applied again for another place of less importance: the answer was much the same as before:—

WHITEHALL, April 5, 1843.

MY DEAR DEAN OF YORK,—I must dispose of the appointment to which you refer upon the same principle on which I have uniformly disposed of every appointment of a similar nature.

I do not consider patronage of this kind (and indeed I may truly say it of all patronage) as the means of gratifying private wishes of any one. Those who have made locally great sacrifices and great exertions for the maintenance of the political cause which they espouse, have always been considered fairly entitled to be consulted in respect to the disposal of local patronage, and would justly complain if, in order to promote the interests of a relative of my own, I were to disregard their recommendations. It would subject me to great personal embarrassment, and be a complete departure from the rule to which I have always adhered.

All patronage of all descriptions, so far from being of the least advantage personally to a minister, involves him in nothing but embarrassment. Ever affectionately yours,

ROBERT PEEL.

"I publish one more letter of the same kind, because all these letters exhibit the character of the writer, and contain matters of some public interest. The distributer of stamps died in the very

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place where my son was resident, and where he and I had exerted considerable interest in assisting the Government members. I thought that now perhaps an exception might be made to the general rule, and I confidently recommended my eldest son for the vacancy. The following was the answer: —

WHITEHALL, May 1.

MY DEAR DEAN, —Whatever arrangements may be made with respect to the office of distributer of stamps, lately held by Mr. ——, I do not feel myself justified in appropriating to myself any share of the local patronage of a county with which I have not the remotest connection by property or any other local tie.

There are three members for the county of —— who support the Government; and in addition to the applications which I shall no doubt have from them, I have already received recommendations from the Duke of —— and Earl ——, each having certainly better claims than I have personally for local appointments in the county of ——.

I feel it quite impossible to make so complete a departure from the principles on which I have invariably acted, and which I feel to be nothing more than consistent with common justice, as to take ——shire offices for my own private purposes.

Very faithfully yours,

ROBERT PEEL.

"These letters show the noble principle on which Sir Robert's public life was founded. I am quite sure that he had a great regard for my sons: he invited them to his shooting quarters, was pleased to find them amusements, and made them many handsome presents; but he steadily refused to enrich them out of the public purse merely because they were his nephews. Many Prime Ministers have not been so scrupulous."

And clearly *one* divine wishes Sir Robert Peel had not been so.

The changes of opinion which Sir Robert Peel underwent are often cited as indications of a want of conscientiousness: they really are (subject of course to the preceding remarks) proofs of his conscientiousness. We do not mean in the obvious sense of their being opposed to his visible interest, and having on two great occasions destroyed the most serviceable party organization ever ruled by a statesman in a political age; but in a more refined sense, the timeliness of

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his transitions may without overstraining be thought a mark of their *bona fides*. He could not have changed with such felicitous exactness if he had been guided by selfish calculation: the problems were too great and too wide. There have of course been a few men — Talleyrand and Theramenes are instances — who have seemed to hit, as if by a political sense, the fitting moment to leave the side which was about to fall and to join the side which was about to rise; but these will commonly be found to be men of a very different character from that of Peel. Minds are divided into open and close. Some men are so sensitive to extrinsic impressions, pass so easily from one man to another, catch so well the tone of each man's thought, use so well the opportunities of society for the purposes of affairs, that they are, as it were, by habit and practice, metrical instruments of public opinion. Sir Robert was by character, both natural and acquired, the very reverse: he was a reserved, occupied man of business; in the arts of society, in the easy transition from person to person, from tone to tone, he was but little skilled. If he had been left to pick up his rules of conduct by mere social perception and observation, his life would have been a life of miscalculations; instead of admiring the timeliness of his conversions, we should wonder at the perversity of his transitions. The case is not new: in ancient times, at a remarkable moment, in the persons of two selfish men of genius, the open mind was contrasted with the close. By a marvelous combination of successive manœuvres, Julius Cæsar rose from ruin to empire: the spoiled child of society; sensitive to each breath of opinion; ever living at least among the externals of enjoyment; always retaining, by a genial kindliness of manner, friends from each of the classes which he variously used. By what the vulgar might be pardoned for thinking a divine infatuation, Pompeius lost the best of political positions, threw away every recurring chance, and died a wandering exile:

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as a reserved, ungenial man, he never was able to estimate the feeling of the time. "I have only to stamp with my foot when the occasion requires, to raise legions from the soil of Italy!" were the words of one who could not, in his utmost need, raise a force to strike one blow for Italy itself. The fate of Pompeius would have been that of Peel, if he too had played the game of selfish calculation. His changes, as it has been explained, are to be otherwise accounted for: he was always anxious to do right; an occupied man of business, he was converted when other men of business in the nation were converted.

It is not, however, to be denied that a calm and bland nature like that of Peel is peculiarly prone to self-illusion. Many fancy that it is passionate, imaginative men who most deceive themselves; and of course they are more tempted, — a more vivid fancy and a more powerful impulse hurry them away, — but they know their own weakness. "Do you believe in ghosts, Mr. Coleridge?" asked some lady. "No, ma'am, I have seen too many," was the answer.* A quiet, calm nature, when it is tempted by its own wishes, is hardly conscious that it is tempted: these wishes are so gentle, quiet, as it would say so "reasonable," that it does not conceive it possible to be hurried away into error by them. Nor *is* there any hurry: they operate quietly, gently, and constantly. Such a man will very much believe what he wishes. Many an imaginative outcast, whom no man would trust with sixpence, really forms his opinions on points which interest him by a much more intellectual process — at least has more purely intellectual opinions beaten and tortured into him — than the eminent and respected man of business, in whom every one confides, who is considered a model of dry judgment, of clear and passionless equanimity. Doubtless Sir Robert Peel went on believing in the Corn Laws when

* Mackintosh's Memoirs, Vol. ii., p. 438.

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no one in the distrusted classes even fancied that they were credible.

It has been bitterly observed of Sir Robert Peel, that he was "a Radical at heart"; and (perhaps with a similar thought in his mind) Mr. Cobden said once, at a League meeting, "I do not like altogether the idea of giving Peel up: he is a Lancashire man."* And it cannot be questioned that, strongly opposed as Sir Robert Peel was to the Reform Bill, he was really much more suited to the reformed than to the unreformed House of Commons. The style of debating in the latter was described by one who had much opportunity for observation—Sir James Mackintosh—as "continuous, animated after-dinner discussion." The House was composed mainly of men trained in two great schools, on a peculiar mode of education; with no great real knowledge of the classics, but with many lines of Virgil and Horace lingering in fading memories, contrasting oddly with the sums and business with which they were necessarily brought side by side. These gentlemen wanted not to be instructed, but to be amused; and hence arose what, from the circumstance of their calling, may be called the class of "conversationalist statesmen." Mr. Canning was the type of these: he was a man of elegant gifts, of easy fluency, capable of embellishing anything; with a nice wit, gliding swiftly over the most delicate topics; passing from topic to topic like the *raconteur* of the dinner table, touching easily on them all, letting them all go as easily, confusing you as to whether he knows nothing or knows everything. The peculiar irritation which Mr. Canning excited through life was—at least in part—owing to the natural wrath with which you hear the changing talk of the practised talker running away about all the universe; never saying anything which indicates real knowledge, never saying anything which at the very moment can be shown to be a blunder; ever on the surface, and ever ingratiating itself with the superficial. When Mr. Canning was

* At Birmingham, Nov. 13, 1845; see Vol. i. of his "Speeches."

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alive, sound men of all political persuasions — the Duke of Wellington, Lord Grey — ever disliked him; you may hear old Liberals to this day declaring he was the greatest charlatan who ever lived, angry to imagine that his very ghost exists; and when you read his speeches yourself, you are at once conscious of a certain dexterous insincerity which seems to lurk in the very felicities of expression, and to be made finer with the very refinements of the phraseology. Like the professional converser, he seems so apt at the *finesse* of expression, so prone to modulate his words, that you cannot imagine him putting his fine mind to tough thinking, really working, actually grappling with the rough substance of a great subject. Of course, if this were the place for an estimate of Mr. Canning, there would be some limitation and much excuse to be offered for all this. He was early thrown into what we may call an aristocratic debating society, accustomed to be charmed, delighting in classic gladiatorship: to expect a great speculator or a principled statesman from such a position would be expecting German from a Parisian or plainness from a diplomatist. He grew on the soil on which he had been cast; and it is hard, perhaps impossible, to separate the faults which are due to it and to him. He and it have both passed away; the old delicate Parliament is gone, and the gladiatorship which it loved. The progress of things, and the Reform Bill which was the result of that progress, have taken and are taking the national representation away from the university classes, and conferring it on the practical classes. Exposition, arithmetic, detail, reforms, — these are the staple of our modern eloquence. The old boroughs which introduced the young scholars are passed away; and even if the young scholars were in Parliament, the subjects do not need the classic tact of expression. Very plain speaking suits the "passing tolls," "registration of joint-stock companies," finance, the post-office. The petty regulation of the details of

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civilization, which happily is the daily task of our government, does not need, does not suit a *recherché* taste or an ornate eloquence. As is the speech, so are the men: Sir Robert Peel was inferior to Canning in the old Parliament, he would have been infinitely superior to him in the new. The aristocratic refinement, the nice embellishment of the old time were as alien to him as the detail and dryness of the new era were suitable; he was admirably fitted to be where the Reform Bill placed him,—he was fitted to work and explain, he was not able to charm or to amuse.

In its exact form this kind of eloquence and statesmanship is peculiar to modern times, and even to this age. In ancient times the existence of slavery forbade the existence of a middle-class eloquence: the Cleon who possessed the tone and the confidence of the people in trade was a man vulgar, coarse, speaking the sentiments of a class whose views were narrow and whose words were mean; so many occupations were confined to slaves that there was scarcely an opening for the sensible, moderate, rational body whom we now see. It was of course always possible to express the sentiments and prejudices of people in trade: it is new to this era, it seems created for Sir Robert Peel, to express those sentiments in a style refined, but not too refined; which will not jar people of high cultivation, which will seem suitable to men of common cares and important transactions.

In another respect Sir Robert Peel was a fortunate man: the principal measures required in his age were "repeals." From changing circumstances, the old legislation would no longer suit a changed community; and there was a clamor, first for the repeal of one important act and then of another. This was suitable to the genius of Peel: he could hardly have created anything; his intellect, admirable in administrative routine, endlessly fertile in suggestions of detail, was not of the class which creates or which

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readily even believes an absolutely new idea. As has been so often said, he typified the practical intelligence of his time. He was prone, as has been explained, to receive the daily deposits of insensibly changing opinion: but he could bear nothing startling; nothing bold, original, single is to be found in his acts or his words. Nothing could be so suitable to such a mind as a conviction that an existing law was wrong: the successive gradations of opinion pointed to a clear and absolute result. When it was a question, as in the case of the Reform Bill, not of simple abolition but of extensive and difficult reconstruction, he "could not see his way." He could be convinced that the anti-Catholic laws were wrong, that the currency laws were wrong, that the commercial laws were wrong; especially he could be convinced that the *laissez-faire* system was right, and the real thing was to do nothing: but he was incapable of the larger and higher political construction. A more imaginative genius is necessary to deal with the consequences of new creations and the structure of an unseen future.

This remark requires one limitation. A great deal of what is called legislation is really administrative regulation: it does not settle what is to be done, but *how* it is to be done; it does not prescribe what our institutions shall be, but directs in what manner existing institutions shall work and operate. Of this portion of legislation Sir Robert Peel was an admirable master: few men have fitted administrative regulations with so nice an adjustment to a prescribed end. The Currency Act of 1844 was an instance of this. If you consult the speeches by which that bill was introduced and explained to Parliament, you certainly will not find any very rigid demonstrations of political economy, or dry compactness of abstract principle. Whether the abstract theory of the supporters of that Act be sound or unsound, no exposition of it ever came from the lips of Peel,—he assumed the results of that theory; but no man saw more quickly

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the nature of the administrative machinery which was required. The separation of the departments of the Bank of England, the limitation of the country issues, though neither of them original ideas of Sir Robert's own mind, yet were not, like most of his other important political acts, forced on him from without. There was a general agreement among the received authorities in favor of a certain currency theory; the administrative statesman saw a good deal before other men what was the most judicious and effectual way of setting it at work and regulating its action.

We have only spoken of Sir Robert Peel as a public man; and if you wish to write what is characteristic about him, that is the way to do so,—he was a man whom it requires an effort to think of as engaged in anything but political business. Disraeli tells us that some one said that Peel was never happy except in the House of Commons, or doing something which had some relation to something to be done there. In common life, we continually see men scarcely separable, as it were, from their pursuits: they are as good as others, but their visible nature seems almost all absorbed in a certain visible calling; when we speak of them we are led to speak of it, when we would speak of it we are led insensibly to speak of them. It is so with Sir Robert Peel. So long as constitutional statesmanship is what it is now, so long as its function consists in recording the views of a confused nation, so long as success in it is confined to minds plastic, changeful, administrative, we must hope for no better man. You have excluded the profound thinker; you must be content with what you can obtain,—the business gentleman.

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*LORD BROUGHAM.**

(1857.)

IT was a bold—perhaps a rash—idea, to collect the writings of Henry Brougham: they were written at such distant dates, their subjects are so various, they are often so wedged into the circumstances of an age, that they scarcely look natural in a series of volumes. Some men, doubtless, by a strong grasp of intellect, have compacted together subjects as various: the finger-marks of a few are on all human knowledge; others, by a rare illuminative power, have lit up as many with a light that seems peculiar to themselves; "Franciscus Baconus sic cogitavit"† may well illustrate an "Opera Omnia." But Lord Brougham has neither power: his restless genius has no claim to the still, illuminating imagination; his many-handed, apprehensive intelligence is scarcely able to fuse and concentrate; variety is his taste, and versatility his power. His career has not been quiet: for many years rushing among the details of an age, he has written as he ran. There are not many undertakings bolder than to collect the works of such a life and such a man.

The edition itself seems a good one: the volumes are convenient in size, well printed, and fairly arranged; the various writings it contains have been revised, but not over-revised, by their author. It is not, however, of the collection that we wish to speak: we would endeavor, so far as a few hasty pages may

* Works of Henry Lord Brougham, F. R. S., Member of the National Institute of France and the Royal Academy of Naples. London: Griffin.

† "Franciscus de Verulamio sic cogitavit" (Francis of Verulam reflected thus), the opening words of the "procemium" to the "Instauratio Magna."

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serve, to delineate the career and character of the writer. The attempt is among the most difficult. He is still among us; we have not the materials, possibly not the impartiality, of posterity. Nor have we the familiar knowledge of contemporaries: the time when Lord Brougham exerted his greatest faculties is beyond the political memory of younger men. There are no sufficient books on the events of a quarter of a century ago, — we have only traditions; and this must be our excuse if we fall or seem to fall into error and confusion.

The years immediately succeeding the great peace were years of sullenness and difficulty. The idea of the war had passed away; the thrill and excitement of the great struggle were no longer felt. We had maintained with the greatest potentate of modern times a successful contest for existence: we had our existence, but we had no more; our victory had been great, but it had no fruits. By the aid of pertinacity and capital we had vanquished genius and valor; but no visible increase of European influence followed. Napoleon said that Wellington had made peace as if he had been defeated. We had delivered the Continent, — such was our natural idea, — but the Continent went its own way. There was nothing in its state to please the every-day Englishman. There were kings and emperors; "which was very well for foreigners, — they had always been like that; but it was not many kings could pay ten per cent. income tax." Absolutism as such cannot be popular in a free country; the Holy Alliance, which made a religion of despotism, was scarcely to be reconciled with the British Constitution. Altogether, we had vanquished Napoleon, but we had no pleasure in what came after him. The cause which agitated our hearts was gone; there was no longer a noise of victories in the air; Continental affairs were dead, despotic, dull, — we scarcely liked to think that we had made them so: with weary dissatisfaction we turned to our own condition.

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This was profoundly unsatisfactory: trade was depressed, agriculture ruinous, the working class singularly disaffected. During the war our manufacturing industry had grown most rapidly; there was a not unnatural expectation that after a general peace the rate of increase would be accelerated. The whole Continent, it was considered, would be opened to us: Milan and Berlin decrees no longer excluded us; Napoleon did not now interpose between the "nation of shopkeepers" and its customers, — now he was at St. Helena, surely those customers would buy? It was half forgotten that they could not. The drain of capital for the war had been at times heavily felt in England; there had been years of poverty and discredit: still, our industry had gone on, our workshops had not stopped. We had never known what it was to be the seat of war as well as a power at war; we had never known our burdens enormously increased just when our industry was utterly stopped; disarranged as trading credit sometimes was, it had not been destroyed; no conscription had drained us of our most efficient consumers. The Continent, south and north, had, though not everywhere alike, suffered all these evils: its populations were poor, harassed, depressed; they could not buy our manufactures, for they had no money. The large preparations for a Continental export lay on hand; our traders were angry and displeased. Nor was content to be found in the agricultural districts. During the war, the British farmer had inevitably a monopoly of this market; at the approach of peace, his natural antipathy to foreign corn influenced the legislature. The Home Secretary of the time had taken into consideration whether 76*s.* or 80*s.* was such a remunerating price as the agriculturist should obtain, and a Corn Law had passed accordingly; but no law could give the farmer famine prices, when there was scarcity here and plenty abroad. There were riots at the passing of the "bread tax," as it was; in 1813 the price of corn

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was 120*s.*, the rural mind was sullen in 1816 when it sunk to 57*s.*, — the protection given, though unpopular with the poor, did not satisfy the farmer.

The lower orders in the manufacturing districts were of necessity in great distress: the depression of trade produced its inevitable results of closed mills and scanty employment; wages, when they could be obtained, were very low. The artisan population was then new to the vicissitudes of industry. How far they are even now instructed in the laws of trade, recent prosperity will hardly let us judge: but at that time they had no doubt that it was the fault of the state — and if not of particular statesmen, then of the essential institutions — that they were in want; they believed the government ought to regulate their remuneration and make it sufficient. During some straitened years of the war the name of "Luddites" became known; they had principally shown their discontent by breaking certain machines, which they fancied deprived them of work. After the peace, the records of the time are full of "Spencean Philanthropists," "Hampden Clubs," and similar associations, all desiring a great reform, — some of mere politics, others of the law of property and all social economy. Large meetings were everywhere held, something like those of the year 1839; a general insurrection (doubtless a wild dream of a few hot-brained dreamers) was fancied to have been really planned. The name "Radical" came to be associated with this discontent. The spirit which in after years clamored distinctly for the five points of the Charter* made itself heard in mutterings and threatenings.

Nor were the capitalists who had created the new wealth, socially more at ease. Many of them, as large employers of labor, had a taste for Toryism: the rule of the people to them meant the rule of their

* *Six* points: universal suffrage, uniform electoral districts, vote by ballot, no property qualification for members, annual Parliaments, payment of members; all of them embodied in the American system (the first two not quite thoroughly). — Ed.

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workpeople. Some of the wealthiest and most skillful became associated with the aristocracy, but it was in vain with the majority to attempt it: between them and the possessors of hereditary wealth there was fixed a great gulf; the contrast of habits, speech, manners, was too wide. The two might coincide in particular opinions; they might agree to support the same institutions; they might set forth, in a Conservative creed, the same form of sound words: but though the abstract conclusions were identical, the mode of holding them (to borrow a subtlety of Father Newman's) was exceedingly different,—the refined, discriminating, timorous immobility of the aristocracy was distinct from the coarse, dogmatic keep-downishness of the manufacturer. Yet more marked was the contrast when the opposite tendencies of temperament had produced, as they soon could not but do, a diversity of opinion. The case was not quite new in England: Mr. Burke spoke of the tendency of the first East-Indians to Jacobinism,—they could not, he said, bear that their present importance should have no proportion to their recently acquired riches.* No extravagant fortunes have in this century been made by Englishmen in India; but Lancashire has been a California. Families have been created there, whose names we all know, which we think of when we mention wealth; some of which are now, by lapse of time, passing into the hereditary caste of recognized opulence. This, however, has been a work of time; and before it occurred, there was no such intermediate class between the new wealth and the old. "It takes," it is said that Sir Robert Peel observed, "three generations to make a gentleman;" in the mean time there was an inevitable misunderstanding,—the new cloth was too coarse for the old. Besides this, many actual institutions offended the eyes of the middle

* "Thoughts on French Affairs," 1791:—"The East-Indians almost to a man, who cannot bear to find that their present importance does not bear a proportion to their wealth."

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class. The state of the law was opposed both to their prejudices and interests: that you could only recover your debts by spending more than the debt was hard; and the injury was aggravated, the money was spent in "special pleading,"—in "putting a plain thing so as to perplex and mislead a plain man." "Lord Eldon and the Court of Chancery," as Sydney Smith expressed it, "pressed heavily on mankind."* The existence of slavery in our colonies, strongly supported by a strong aristocratic and parliamentary influence, offended the principles of middle-class Christianity and the natural sentiments of simple men. The cruelty of the penal law—the punishing with death sheep-stealing and shoplifting—jarred the humanity of that second order of English society, which, from their habits of reading and non-reading, may be called *par excellence* the "Scriptural classes." The routine harshness of a not very wise executive did not mitigate the feeling: the *modus operandi* of government appeared coarse and oppressive.

We seemed to pay, too, a good deal for what we did not like. At the close of the war, the ten per cent. income tax was of course heavily oppressive. The public expenditure was beyond argument lavish; and it was spent in pensions, sinecures (for "them idlers," in the speech of Lancashire), and a mass of sundries that an economical man of business will scarcely admit to be necessary, and that even now, after countless prunings, produce periodically "financial reform associations," "administrative leagues," and other combinations which amply testify the enmity of thrifty efficiency to large figures and muddling management. There had remained from the eighteenth century a tradition of corruption, an impression that direct pecuniary malversation pervaded the public offices; an idea true in the days of Rigby or Bubb Dodington,† but which, like many other impressions,

*Preface to his Works.

†The latter under George I. and II.; the former one of George III.'s main jobbers. — ED.

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continued to exist many years after the facts in which it originated had passed away. Government in the hands of such a man as Lord Liverpool was very different from government in the hands of Sir Robert Walpole: respectability was exacted; of actual money-taking there was hardly any. Still, especially among inferior officials, there was something to shock modern purity. The size of jobs was large: if the Treasury of that time could be revived, it would be depressed at the littleness of whatever is perpetrated in modern administration. There were petty abuses, too, in the country, — in municipalities, in charitable trusts, in all outlying public moneys, — which seemed to the offended man of business, who saw them with his own eyes, evident instances confirming his notion of the malpractices of Downing Street. "There are only five little boys in the school of Richester;* they may cost £200, and the income is £2,000, and the trustees don't account for the balance: which is the way things are done in England, — 'we keeps an aristocracy,'† " etc. The whole of this feeling was concentrated into a detestation of rotten boroughs. The very name was enough: that Lord Dover,‡ with two patent sinecures in the Exchequer and a good total for assisting in nothing at the Audit office, should return two members for one House, while Birmingham, where they made buttons, — "as good buttons as there are in the world, sir," — returned no members at all, was an evident indication that reform was necessary. Mr. Canning was an eloquent man; but "even *he* could not say that a decaying stump was the *people*." Gatton and Old Sarum became unpopular: the source of power seemed absurd, and the use of power was tainted. Side by side with the incipient Chartism of the Northern operative, there was growing daily more distinct and clear the Manchester philosophy, which has since expressed itself in the Anti-Corn-Law

*An imaginary case, — there is no such place in England. — ED.

† "Laws, sir, we keeps a poet," — the fabled reply of the wife of one of the firm of Day & Martin, in their early days, to a solicitation to subscribe for a volume of poems. — ED.

‡ Imaginary, — there was no such title at this time. — ED.

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League, and which for good and evil is now an element so potent in our national life. Both creeds were forms of discontent; and the counterpoise was wanting. The English Constitution has provided that there shall always be one estate raised above the storms of passion and controversy, which all parties may respect and honor, — the king is to be loved; but this theory requires, for a real efficiency, that the throne be filled by such a person as can be loved. In those times it was otherwise: the nominal possessor of the crown was a very old man, whom an incurable malady had long sequestered from earthly things; the actual possessor of the royal authority was a voluptuary of overgrown person, now too old for healthy pleasure, and half sickened himself at the corrupt pursuits in which nevertheless he indulged perpetually. His domestic vices had become disgracefully public: whatever might be the truth about Queen Caroline, no one could say she had been well treated. There was no loyalty on which suffering workers or an angry middle class could repose; all through the realm there was a miscellaneous agitation, a vague and wandering discontent.

The official mind of the time was troubled. We have a record of its speculations in the life of Lord Sidmouth, who more than any one [else] perhaps embodied it. He had been Speaker, and was much inclined to remedy the discontent of the middle classes by "naming them to the House." A more conscientious man perhaps has never filled a public position: if the forms of the House of Commons had been intuitively binding, no one could have obeyed them better; the "mace" was a "counsel of perfection" to him, all disorder hateful. In the Home Office it was the same: the Luddites were people who would not obey the Speaker; constituted authority must be enforced. The claims of a suffering multitude were not so much neglected as unappreciated: a certain illiberality, as we should now speak, pervades the

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whole kind of thought; the most striking feature is an indisposition, which by long indulgence has become an inability, to comprehend another person's view, to put one's self in another's mental place, to think what he thinks, to conceive what he inevitably is. Lord Sidmouth referred to the file; he found that Mr. Pitt had put down disaffection by severe measures: accordingly he suspended the Habeas Corpus Act, passed six acts,* commended a Peterloo massacre, — not with conscious unfeelingness but from an absorbed officiality, from a knowledge that this was what "the department" had done before and an inference that this must be done again. As for the reforming ideas of the middle classes, red tape had never tied up such notions; perhaps it was the French revolution over again, — you could not tolerate *them.*

Between such a dominant mind as this and such a subject mind as has been described there was a daily friction. The situation afforded obvious advantages to enterprising men. Its peculiarity did not escape the shrewd eyes of John Lord Eldon: "If," said the Conservative Chancellor, "I were to begin life again, d—n my eyes but I would begin as an agitator."† Henry Brougham did so begin. During the war he had distinguished himself in the exposition of the grievances of the trading interest. Our government had chosen a mode of carrying it on specially fitted to injure our commerce: — "Napoleon had said that no vessel should touch a British port and then enter a French one, or one under French control; the Orders in Council said that no vessel whatever should enter any such port unless she had first touched at some port of Great Britain."‡ The natural results were the annihilation of our trade with the Continent

* See Vol. ii., page 269, of this edition.

† See Vol. iv., page 193, note.

‡ This and the following quotations are from the Speeches of Lord Brougham and the Introductions to them published in 1838. The latter were written by himself. — B. This quotation is from the Introduction to the speech on "Commerce and Manufactures and the Orders in Council" (June 16, 1812), Vol. i.

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and a quarrel with the United States; the merchants of the country were alarmed at both consequences. Perhaps until then men hardly knew how powerful our trading classes had become. Meetings were held in populous places; petitions in great numbers — an impressive and important thing in those times — were presented. Wherever foreign commerce existed, the discontent expressed itself in murmurs. The forms of the House of Commons were far more favorable than they now are to action from without; and this is not unnatural, since there had been as yet but few actions from without, and it had not been necessary to have a guard against them.* The petitions, as has been said, were numerous; and on the presentation of each there was a speech from the member presenting it, trying to bring on a debate,† and suggesting topics which might irritate the ministry and convince the country. Mr. Brougham was always in his place. "Hardly an hour passed without detecting some false statement or illogical argument; hardly a night passed without gaining some convert to the cause of truth."‡ The result was decisive. "Although opposed by the whole weight of the Government both in public and out of doors; although at first vigorously resisted by the energy, the acuteness, the activity, and the expertness which made Mr. Perceval one of the best debaters of his day; although, after his death, the struggle was maintained by the father of the system§ with all his fire and with his full knowledge of the whole subject; nay, although" the ministry risked their existence on the

*The success and volume of these petitions led to a change soon after in parliamentary procedure; a member presenting one being allowed only to state its substance and the source whence it came, and no other member being allowed to remark upon it. — ED.

†The ministerial party at first adopted the policy of remaining totally silent, and simply voting down all motions by a brute majority; which brought such odium and contempt upon them both in and out of Parliament that they were finally compelled to take part in the debates. — ED.

‡This and the remaining quotations on the page are from the Introduction to the speech on "Agricultural Distress" (April 9, 1816), Vol. i.

§James Stephen, grandfather of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen.

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question, the victory remained with the petitioners: the Orders in Council were abolished, and the efficacy of agitation proved. "The session of 1816 offered an example yet more remarkable of the same tactics being attended with equally signal success. On the termination of the war, the Government were determined, instead of repealing the whole income tax, which the act enforcing it declared to be 'for and during the continuance of the war, and no longer,' to retain one-half of it. . . . As soon as this intention was announced, several meetings were held;"* some "petitions were presented;" Mr. Brougham declared that if the motion were pressed on Thursday, "he should avail himself of all the means of delay afforded by the forms of the House." Of course the unpopularity of paying money was decisive: the income tax fell. The same faculty of aggression which had been so successful in these instances was immediately so applied as to give voice to the sullenness of the country; to express forms of discontent as real, though not with an object as determinate.

Mr. Brougham did not understate his case. "There is one branch of the argument which I shall pass over altogether,—I mean the *amount* of the distresses which are now universally admitted to prevail over almost every part of the empire. Upon this topic all men are agreed; the statements connected with it are as unquestionable as they are afflicting."† Nor did he shrink from detail:—"I shall suppose," he observed to the House, "a farm of 400 acres of fair good land, yielding a rent of from £500 to £600 a year. . . . It will require for a four-years' course, 200 acres being in corn, 100 fallow, and 100 in hay and grass—" and he seems to prove that at least it *ought* not to answer, "independent of the great rise on lime and all sorts of manure." The commercial mania of the time takes its turn in the description:—

* Introduction to the speech on "Agricultural Distress" (April 9, 1816), Vol. i.

† The remaining quotations on this page are from the same speech.

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"After the cramped state in which the enemy's measures and our own retaliation (as we termed it) had kept our trade for some years, when the events of spring 1814 suddenly opened the Continent, a rage for exporting goods of every kind burst forth, only to be explained by reflecting on the previous restrictions we had been laboring under, and only to be equaled (though not in extent) by some of the mercantile delusions connected with South American speculations. Everything that could be shipped was sent off; all the capital that could be laid hold of was embarked. The frenzy — I can call it nothing less, after the experience of 1806 and 1810 — descended to persons in the humblest circumstances, and the farthest removed by their pursuits from commercial cares. It may give the committee some idea of this disease, if I state what I know to have happened in one or two places. Not only clerks and laborers, but menial servants, engaged the little sums which they had been laying up for a provision against old age and sickness: persons went round tempting them to adventure in the trade to Holland and Germany and the Baltic; they risked their mite in the hopes of boundless profits, it went with the millions of the more regular traders. The bubble soon burst, like its predecessors of the South Sea, the Mississippi, and Buenos Ayres: English goods were selling for much less in Holland and the North of Europe than in London and Manchester; in most places they were lying a dead weight without any sale at all, and either no returns whatever were received, or pounds came back for thousands that had gone forth. The great speculators broke; the middling ones lingered out a precarious existence, deprived of all means of continuing their dealings either at home or abroad; the poorer dupes of the delusion had lost their little hoards, and went upon the parish the next mishap that befell them: but the result of the whole has been much commercial distress, a caution now absolutely necessary in trying new adventures, a prodigious diminution in the demand for manufactures, and indirectly a serious defalcation in the effectual demand for the produce of land."*

Next year† Mr. Brougham described as the worst season ever known. The year 1812, a year before esteemed one of much suffering, rose in comparison to one of actual prosperity. He began‡ with "the clothing, — a branch of trade which, from accidental circumstances, is not so depressed as our other great

* Same speech. † 1817.

‡ Speech on "Manufacturing Distress" (March 13, 1817), Vol. i.

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staples;" he passed to the iron trade, etc., etc.; he dilated on the distress, the discontent and suffering of the people: of course the Government were to blame. He moved that the "unexampled . . . difficulties" of "trade and manufactures" were

"materially increased by the policy pursued with respect to our foreign commerce; . . . that the continuance of these difficulties is in a great degree owing to the severe pressure of taxation under which the country labors, and which ought by every practicable means to be lightened; that the system of foreign policy pursued by his Majesty's ministers has not been such as to obtain for the people of this country those commercial advantages which the influence of Great Britain in foreign courts fairly entitled them to expect."*

As became a pupil of the Edinburgh University, Mr. Brougham was not averse to political economy; he was ready to discuss the theory of rent or the Corn Laws. He made a speech, which he relates as having had a greater success than any other which he made in Parliament, "in support of Mr. Calcraft's amendment 'to substitute £192,638 4*s.* 9*d.* for £385,276 9*s.* 6*d.*, the estimate for the household troops.'"† Foreign policy was a favorite topic: "almost unsupported," as he said some years after, he attacked the Holy Alliance.‡ Looking back through the softening atmosphere of reminiscence, he almost seems to have a kindness for Lord Castlereagh: he remembers with pleasure the utter

"courage with which he exposed himself unabashed to the most critical audience in the world, while incapable of uttering two sentences of anything but the meanest matter, in the most wretched language;" nor has he "forgotten the kind of pride that mantled on the fronts of the Tory phalanx when, after being overwhelmed with the powerful fire of the Whig Opposition, or galled by the fierce denunciations of the Mountain, or harassed by the splendid displays of Mr. Canning, their chosen leader stood forth, and presenting the graces of his eminently patrician figure, flung open his

*Same speech.

†Speech on the "Army Estimates" (March 11, 1816), Vol. i.

‡Introduction to the speech on the "War with Spain" (Feb. 4, 1823), Vol. i.

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coat, displayed an azure ribbon traversing a snow-white chest, and declared 'his high satisfaction that he could now meet the charges against him face to face, and repel with indignation all that his adversaries had been bold and rash enough to advance.'"*

But the "Mr. Brougham" of that time showed no admiration: no denunciations were stronger than his, no sarcasm impinged more deeply; if the "noble lord in the blue ribbon" wished any one out of the House, the "man from the Northern Circuit" was probably that one. Kings and emperors met with little mercy, and later years have shown how little was merited by the petty absolutism and unthinking narrowness of that time.

That Mr. Brougham indissolubly connected the education movement with his name, everybody knows; but scarcely any one remembers how unpopular that movement was. Mr. Windham had said some years before:—"That the diffusion of knowledge was proper, might be supported by many good arguments; but he confessed that he was himself a skeptic on this point. It was said, Look at the state of the savage when compared with ours: A savage among savages was *very well*, and the difference was only perceived when he came to be introduced into civilized society. . . . His friend Dr. Johnson was of opinion that it was not right to teach reading beyond a certain extent in society."† The same feeling continued: Mr. Peel, in his blandest tones, attacked the education committee;‡ Lord Stowell, not without sagacity, observed, "If you provide a larger amount of highly cultivated talent than there is a demand for, the surplus is very likely to turn sour."§ Such were the sentiments of some of the best scholars of that era, and so went all orthodox sentiment: that education was the same as republicanism, and republicanism as infidelity, half

*Same Introduction.

†Speech on the Poor Laws Bill, April 24, 1807.

‡June 23, 1819, speech on the Charitable Foundations Bill.

§Pellew's "Life of Sidmouth," note to Vol. iii., Chap. xxxix.

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the curates believed. But in spite of all this opposition, perhaps with more relish on account of it, Mr. Brougham was ever ready: he was a kind of prophet of knowledge,—his voice was heard in the streets; he preached the gospel of the alphabet, he sang the praises of the primer all the day long. "Practical Observations," "Discourses," "Speeches" exist,* terrible to all men now. To the kind of education then advocated there may be objections; we may object to the kind of "knowledge" then most sought after: but there can be no doubt that those who then labored in its behalf must be praised for having inculcated, in the horrid heat of the day, as a boring paradox what is now a boring commonplace.

Our space would fail us if we were to attempt to recount Brougham's labors on the slavery question, on George IV. and Queen Caroline, or his hundred encounters with the routine statesmen: the series commenced at the peace, but it continued for many years; is not its history written in the chronicles of Parliament? You must turn the leaves—no unpleasant reading—of those old debates, and observe how often Mr. Brougham's name occurs, and on what cumbrous subjects, before you can estimate the frequency of his attacks and the harassing harshness of his labor. One especial subject was his more than any other man's,—law reform. He had Romilly and Mackintosh as fellow-laborers in the amelioration of the penal code; he had their support, and that of some others, in his incessant narrations of the grievances of individuals, and denunciations of the unfeeling unthinkingness of our home administration: but no man grappled so boldly—we had almost said so coarsely—with the crude complexities of our civil jurisprudence; for a rougher nature, a more varied knowledge of action than we can expect of philanthropists were needed for that task. The subject was most difficult to deal with. The English commerce

*In Vol. iii. of Brougham's Speeches.

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and civilization had grown up in the meshes of a half-feudal code, further complicated with the curious narrowness and spirit of chicane which haunt everywhere the law courts of early times. The technicality which produced the evil made the remedy more difficult: there was no general public opinion on the manner of reform; the public felt the evil, but no one could judge of the efficacy of a remedy save persons studious in complicated learning, who would hardly be expected to show how that learning could be rendered useless, — hardly, indeed, to imagine a world in which it did not exist. The old creed that these ingenious abuses were the last "perfection of reason"* still lingered. It must give Lord Brougham some pride to reflect how many of the improvements which he was the first to popularize, if not to suggest, have been adopted; how many old abuses of detail, which he first indicated to Parliament, exist no longer; how many more are now admitted by everybody to be abuses, though the mode of abolition is contested: the speech on law reform which he published in the collected edition of his speeches is nearly a summary of all that has been done or suggested in common or civil law reform for the last thirty years. The effect which so bold an attack on so many things by a single person produced in that conservative time was prodigious. "There never was such a nuisance as the man is," said an old lawyer whom we knew; and he expressed the feeling of his profession. If we add that beside all these minor reforms and secondary agitations, Mr. Brougham was a bold advocate of Catholic emancipation and parliamentary reform, — the largest heresies of that epoch, — we may begin to understand the sarcasm of Mr. Canning: —

"The honorable and learned gentleman having, in the course of his parliamentary life, proposed and supported *almost every species and degree of innovation* which could be practiced towards the

* "The law, which is perfection of reason." — Coke's "First Institute."

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Constitution, it was not very easy for ministers to do anything . . . without seeming to borrow something from him. . . . Break away in what direction they would, whether they took to the left or right, it was all alike: 'Oho!' said the honorable and learned gentleman, 'I was there before you, — you would not have thought of that if I had not given you a hint.' In the reign of Queen Anne there was a sage and grave critic of the name of Dennis, who in his old age got it into his head that he wrote all the good plays that were acted at that time. At last a tragedy came forth with a most imposing storm of hail and thunder: at the first peal, 'That's my thunder,' said Dennis. So with the honorable and learned gentleman: there was no noise or stir for the good of mankind in any part of the globe, but he instantly claimed it for his thunder."*

We may have wearied our readers with these long references to old conflicts, but it was necessary. We are familiar with the aberrations of the ex-Chancellor; we forget how bold, how efficacious, how varied was the activity of Henry Brougham.

There are several qualities in his genius which make such a life peculiarly suited to him. The first of these is an aggressive, impulsive disposition. Most people may admit that the world goes ill; old abuses seem to exist, questionable details to abound; hardly any one thinks that anything may not be made better: but how to improve the world, to repair the defects, is a difficulty. Immobility is a part of man; a sluggish conservatism is the basis of our English nature. "*Learn*, my son," said the satirist, "to bear tranquilly the calamities of others:" we easily learn it. Most men have a line of life, and it imposes certain duties which they fulfill; but they cannot be induced to start out of that line. We dwell in "a firm basis of content." "Let the mad world go

* Address on the King's Speech, Feb. 3, 1825. Bagehot's text is murdered from the report in the *Annual Register* (here restored), which differs trivially from that in Hansard. That in the edition of Canning's Speeches (in which the date is wrongly given as Feb. 15) is totally different, and very much less crisp and effective. — ED.

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its own way, for it will go its own way." There is no doctrine of the English Church more agreeable to our instinctive taste than that which forbids all works of supererogation.* "You did a thing without being obliged," said an eminent statesman: "then that must be wrong." We travel in the track. Lord Brougham is the opposite of this: it is not difficult to him to attack abuses; the more difficult thing for him would be to live in a world without abuses. An intense excitability is in his nature: he must "go off"; he is eager to reform corruption, and rushes out to refute error; a tolerant placidity is altogether denied to him.

And not only is this excitability eager, it is many-sided. The men who have in general exerted themselves in labors for others have generally been rather of a brooding nature: certain ideas, views, and feelings have impressed themselves on them in solitude; they come forth with them among the crowd, but they have no part in its diversified life, — they are almost irritated by it. They have no conception except of their cause; they are abstracted in one thought, pained with the dizziness of a heated idea. There is nothing of this in Brougham: he is excited by what he sees; the stimulus is from without. He saw the technicalities of the law courts; observed a charitable trustee misusing the charity moneys; perceived that George IV. oppressed Queen Caroline; went to Old Sarum. He is not absorbed in a creed, he is pricked by facts; accordingly, his activity is miscellaneous. The votary of a doctrine is concentrated, for the logical consequences of a doctrine are limited; but an open-minded man, who is aroused by what he sees, quick at discerning abuses, ready to reform anything which he thinks goes wrong, will never have done

*No. 14 of the Articles.

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acting: the details of life are endless, and each of them may go wrong in a hundred ways.

Another faculty of Brougham (in metaphysics it is perhaps but a phase of the same) is the faculty of easy anger. The supine placidity of civilization is not favorable to animosity; a placid Conservative is perhaps a little pleased that the world is going a *little* ill. Lord Brougham does not feel this: like an Englishman on the Continent, he is ready to blow up any one. He is a Jonah of detail; he is angry at the dust of life, and wroth with the misfeasances of employees. The most reverberating of bastinadoes is the official mind basted by Brougham. You did *this* wrong; why did you omit *that?* Document C ought to be on the third file; paper D is wrongly docketed in the ninth file. Red-tape will scarcely succeed when it is questioned; you should take it as Don Quixote did his helmet, without examination, for a most excellent helmet. A vehement, industrious man, proposing to untie papers and not proposing to spare errors, is the terror of a respectable administrator. "Such an impracticable man, sir,—interfering with the *office*, attacking private character, messing in what cannot concern him." These are the gibes which attend an irritable anxiety for the good of others; they have attended Lord Brougham through life. He has enough of misanthropy to be a philanthropist.

How much of this is temper and how much public spirit, it is not for any one to attempt to say. That a natural pleasure in wrath is part of his character, no one who has studied the career of Brougham can doubt; but no fair person can doubt, either, that he has shown on many great occasions—and what is more, on many petty occasions—a rare zeal for the public welfare. He may not be capable of the settled calm by which the world is best administered; there is a want of consistency in his goodness, of concentration in his action; the gusts of passion pass over him, and he is gone for a time, you can scarcely say

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where: but though he is the creature of impulse, his impulses are often generous and noble ones. No one would do what he has done, no one could have the intense motive power to do what he has done, without a large share of diffused unselfishness; the irritation of the most acute excitability would not suffice. It is almost an axiom in estimates of human nature, that in its larger operations all that nature must concur. Doubtless there is a thread of calculation in the midst of his impulses: no man rises to be Lord Chancellor without (at least in lulls and intervals of impulse) a most discriminating and careful judgment of men and things and chances. But after every set-off and abatement, and without any softening of unamiable indications, there will yet remain — and a long series of years will continue to admire it — an eager principle of disinterested action.

Lord Brougham's intellectual powers were as fitted for the functions of a miscellaneous agitator as his moral character. The first of these, perhaps, is a singular faculty of conspicuous labor. In general, the work of agitation proceeds in this way: A conspicuous, fascinating popular orator is ever on the surface, ever ready with appropriate argument, making motions, attracting public attention; beneath and out of sight are innumerable workers and students, unfit for the public eye, getting up the facts, elaborating conclusions, supplying the conspicuous orator with the data on which he lives. There is a perpetual controversy, when the narrative of the agitation comes to be written, whether the merit of what is achieved belongs to the skillful advocate who makes a subtle use of what is provided for him, or the laborious inferiors and juniors who compose the brief and set in order the evidence. For all that comes before the public, Lord Brougham has a wonderful power: he can make motions, addresses, orations, when you wish and on what you wish; he is like a machine for moving amendments; he can keep at work any number of

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persons under him. Every agitation has a tendency to have an office: some league, some society, some body of laborers must work regularly at its details. Mr. Brougham was able to rush hither and thither through a hundred such kinds of men, and gather up the whole stock of the most recent information, the extreme decimals of the statistics, and diffuse them immediately with eager comment to a listening world. This may not be — indeed, is not — the strictest and most straining kind of labor: the anxious, wearing, verifying, self-imposed scrutiny of scattered and complicated details is a far more exhausting task; it is this which makes the eye dim and the face pale and the mind heavy. The excitement of a multifarious agitation will carry the energies through much; the last touches — and it is these which exhaust — need not be put on any one subject. Yet after all deductions, such a career requires a quantity far surpassing all that most men have of life and *verve* and mind.

Another advantage of Lord Brougham is his extreme readiness: what he can do, he can do at a moment's notice. He has always had this power; Lord Holland in his "Memoirs," referring to transactions which took place many years ago, gives an illustration of it: —

"The management of our press" (he is speaking of the question of the general election of 1807) "fell into the hands of Mr. Brougham. With that active and able man I had become acquainted through Mr. Allen in 1805. At the formation of Lord Grenville's ministry he had written, at my suggestion, a pamphlet called 'The State of the Nation.' He subsequently accompanied Lord Rosslyn and Lord St. Vincent to Lisbon. His early connection with the Abolitionists had familiarized him with the means of circulating political papers, and given him some weight with those best qualified to co-operate in such an undertaking. His extensive knowledge and extraordinary readiness, his assiduity and habits of composition, enabled him to correct some articles and to furnish a prodigious number himself. With partial and scanty assistance from Mr. Allen, myself, and two or three more, he in the course of ten days filled every bookseller's shop with pamphlets, most London newspapers and

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all country ones without exception with paragraphs, and supplied a large portion of the boroughs throughout the kingdom with handbills adapted to the local interests of the candidates, and all tending to enforce the principles, vindicate the conduct, elucidate the measures, or expose the adversaries of the Whigs."*

Another power which was early remarked of Brougham, and which is as necessary as any to an important leader in great movements, is a skillful manipulation of men. Sir James Mackintosh noted in his Journal, on Jan. 30, 1818:—

"The address and insinuation of Brougham are so great that nothing but the bad temper which he cannot always hide could hinder him from mastering everybody as he does Romilly. He *leads* others to his opinions; he generally appears at first to concur with theirs, and never more than half opposes it at once. This management is helped by an air of easy frankness that would lay suspicion herself asleep. He will place himself at the head of an Opposition among whom he is unpopular; he will conquer the House of Commons, who hate but now begin to fear him."†

An observer of faces would fancy he noted in Lord Brougham this pliant astuteness marred by ill-temper; it has marked his career.

Another essential quality in multifarious agitation is an extreme versatility. No one can deny Lord Brougham this. An apparently close observer has described him:—

"Take the routine of a day, for instance. In his early life he has been known to attend, in his place in court, on circuit, at an early hour in the morning. After having successfully pleaded the cause of his client, he drives off to the hustings, and delivers, at different places, eloquent and spirited speeches to the electors. He then sits down in the retirement of his closet to pen an address to the Glasgow students, perhaps, or an elaborate article in the *Edinburgh Review*. The active labors of the day are closed with preparation for the court business of the following morning; and then, in place of retiring to rest, as ordinary men would after such exertions, he spends the night in abstruse study, or in social

*Vol. ii., Book iv.

†In the first edition of the "Memoirs"; expunged in the second.—Ed.

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intercourse with some friend from whom he has been long separated. Yet he would be seen, as early as eight on the following morning, actively engaged in the court in defense of some unfortunate object of government persecution, astonishing the auditory, and his fellow-lawyers no less, with the freshness and power of his eloquence. A fair contrast with this history of a day in early life would be that of one at a more advanced period; say in the year 1832. A watchful observer might see the new Lord Chancellor seated in the court over which he presided, from an early hour in the morning until the afternoon, listening to the arguments of counsel, and mastering the points of cases with a grasp of mind that enabled him to give those speedy and unembarrassed judgments that have so injured him with the profession. If he followed his course, he would see him, soon after the opening of the House of Lords, addressing their Lordships on some intricate question of law, with an acuteness that drew down approbation even from his opponents; or, on some all-engrossing political topic, casting firebrands into the camp of the enemy, and awakening them from the complacent repose of conviction to the hot contests with more active and inquiring intellects. Then, in an hour or so, he might follow him to the Mechanics' Institution, and hear an able and stimulating discourse on education, admirably adapted to the peculiar capacity of his auditors; and towards ten, perhaps, at a Literary and Scientific Institution in Marylebone, the same Proteus-like intellect might be found expounding the intricacies of physical science with a never-tiring and elastic power. Yet during all those multitudinous exertions, time would be found for the composition of a discourse on Natural Theology that bears no marks of haste or excitement of mind, but presents as calm a face as though it had been the laborious production of a contemplative philosopher."*

We may differ in our estimate of the *quality* of these various efforts; but no one can deny to him who was capable of them a great share in what Adam Smith mentioned as one of the most important facilities to the intellectual laborer, — a quickness in "changing his hand."†

Nor would any of these powers be sufficient, without that which is in some sense the principle of them

* Unidentifiable; apparently a newspaper "puff." — ED.

† Doubtless an allusion to the sentence, "A man commonly saunters a little in turning his hand from one employment to another," in the "Wealth of Nations," Book i., Chap. i.; but it refers to *manual* labor. — ED.

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all, — an enterprising intellect. In the present day this is among the rarest of gifts: the speciality of pursuits is attended with a timidity of mind. Each subject is given up to men who cultivate it and it only, who are familiar with its niceties and absorbed in its details; there is no one who dares to look at the whole. "I have taken *all* knowledge to be my province," said Lord Bacon:* the notion (and still more the expression) of it seems ridiculous now. The survey of each plot in the world of knowledge is becoming more complete, — we shall have a plan of each soon, on a seven-inch scale; but we are losing the picturesque pictures of the outside and surface of knowledge in the survey of its whole. We have the petty survey, as we say, but no chart, no globe of the entire world; no bold sketch of its obvious phenomena, as they strike the wayfarer and impress themselves on the imagination. The man of the speciality cannot describe the large outlines, — he is too close upon the minutiæ, he does not know the relations of other knowledge; and no one else dares to infringe on his province — on "the study of his life" — for fear of committing errors in detail which he alone knows, and which he may expose. Lord Brougham has nothing of this cowardice: he is ready to give, in their boldest and most general form, the rough outlines of knowledge as they strike the man of the world, occupied in its affairs and familiar with its wishes. He is not cooped up in a single topic, and he has no dread of those who are. He may fall into error, but he exhibits a subject as it is seen by those who know other subjects, by a man who knows the world; he at least attempts an embracing conception of his topic, he makes you feel its connection with reality and affairs. He has exhibited this virtue at all stages of his career, but it was most valuable in his earlier time: there is no requisite so important

* Letter to Lord Burleigh, No. 1 of Montagu's edition.

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as intellectual courage in one who seeks to improve all things in all ways.

His oratory also suits the character of the hundred-subject agitator well: it is rough and ready; it abounds in sarcasm, in vituperation, in aggression; it does not shrink from detail; it would batter anything at any moment. We may think as we will on its merits as a work of art; but no one can deny its exact adaptation to a versatile and rushing agitator, to a tribune of detail.

The deficiencies of Brougham's character — in some cases they seem but the unfavorable aspects of its excellences — were also fitted for his earlier career. The first of these, to say it in a sentence, is the want of a thinking intellect. A miscellaneous agitator must be ready to catch at anything, to attack everything, to blame any one: this is not the life for a mind of anxious deliberation. The patient philosopher, who is cautious in his positions, dubious of his data, slow in his conclusions, must fail at once: he would be investigating while he should attack, inquiring while he should speak; he could not act upon a chance, — the moment of action would be gone. A sanguine and speedy intellect, ready to acquire, by its very idea all but excludes the examining, scrupulous, hesitating intellect which reflects.

Nor would a man of very sensitive judgment endure such a career. An agitator must err by excess; a delicate nature errs by defects. There is a certain coarseness in the abusive breed; a Cleon should not feel failure. No man has ever praised very highly Lord Brougham's judgment; but to have exceedingly improved it would perhaps have impaired his earlier utility. You might as fitly employ some delicate lady as a rough-rider, as a man of a poising, refining judgment in the task of a grievance stater.

Harsh nerves, too, are no disadvantage; perhaps they are essential. Very nice nerves would shrink from a scattered and jangled life; three days out of

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six the sensitive frame would be jarred, the agitator would be useless. It is possible indeed to imagine that in a single noble cause, — a cause that would light up the imagination, that would move the inner soul, — a temperament the most delicate, a frame that is most poetic, might well be absorbingly interested. A little of such qualities may be essential: the apostle of a creed must have the nature to comprehend that creed; his fancy must take it in, his feelings realize it, his nature absorb it, — to move the finer nature, you need the deeper nature. Perhaps even in a meaner cause, in a cause which should take a hold on the moving mob, sway the masses, rule the popular fancy, rough as the task of the mob orator is, you require the delicate imagination: one finds some trace of it — still more of what is its natural accompaniment, a sweet nature — buried in the huge frame and coarse exterior of O'Connell; no unpoetic heart could touch the Irish people. Lord Brougham is prose itself. He was described many years ago as excelling all men "in a knowledge of the course of exchange. He is," continued the satirist, "apprised of the exact state of our exports and imports, and scarce a ship clears out its cargo at Liverpool or Hull but he has notice of the bill of lading."* To explain the grievances of men of business needs no poetic nature; it scarcely needs the highest powers of invective, — there is something nearly ridiculous in being the "Mirabeau of sums."

There is a last quality, which is difficult to describe in the language of books, but which Lord Brougham excels in, and which has perhaps been of more value to him than all his other qualities put together: in the speech of ordinary men it is called "devil"; persons instructed in the German language call it "the demonic element." What it is, one can hardly express in a single sentence. It is most easily explained by physiognomy: there is a glare in some men's eyes

* Hazlitt on Brougham, in the "Spirit of the Age."

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which seems to say, "Beware, I am dangerous; *noli me tangere.*" Lord Brougham's face has this: a mischievous excitability is the most obvious expression of it; if he were a horse, nobody would buy him, — with that eye, no one could answer for his temper. Such men are often not really resolute, but they are not pleasant to be near in a difficulty: they have an aggressive eagerness which is formidable; they would kick against the pricks sooner than not kick at all. A little of the demon is excellent for an agitator.

His peculiar adaptation to his peculiar career raised Mr. Brougham in a few years to a position such as few men have ever obtained in England, — such as no other man perhaps has attained by popular agitation. When he became [a] member for Yorkshire in 1830, he was a power in the country. The cause which he was advocating had grown of itself: the power of the middle classes, especially of the commercial classes, had increased; Lord Eldon was retiring, Lord Sidmouth had retired; what we now call "liberality" was coming into fashion; men no longer regarded the half-feudal Constitution as a "form of thought," * — argument was at least thought fair. And this seems likely and natural: no one can wonder that the influence of men of business grew with the development of business, and that they adopted the plain, straightforward, cautious creed which we now know to be congenial to them. It is much more difficult to explain how reform became a passion. The state of the public mind during the crisis of the Reform Bill is one which those who cannot remember it cannot understand: the popular enthusiasm, the intense excitement, the rush of converts, the union of rectors and squires with those against whom they had respectively so long preached and sworn, the acclamation for the "whole bill and nothing but the bill," are become utterly strange. As the first French Assembly in a single night abolished, with public outcry, the essential

* The Thirty-nine Articles have been said to be "forms of thought." — Ed.

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abuses of the old *régime*, so our fathers at once and with enthusiasm abolished the close boroughs and the old representation, the lingering abuses of half-feudal England. The present Frenchmen are said not to comprehend Aug. 4: we can hardly understand the year '32, — an apathy has fallen upon us; but we can nevertheless, and without theorizing, comprehend what an advantage such an enthusiasm was to the Liberals of that time. Most Whig ministries have been like Low-Church bishops: there is a feeling that the advocates of liberty ought scarcely to coerce; they have ruled, but they seem to deny the succession by which they ruled; they have been distrusted by a vague and half-conservative sentiment. In the tumult of 1832 all such feelings were carried away; Toryism was abolished with delight.

Mr. Brougham was among the first to share the advantage. There is a legend that in the first Whig ministry, Lord Brougham was offered the post of Attorney-General, and that he only replied by disdainfully tearing up the letter containing the offer. Whether the anecdote be literally true or not, we cannot say: the first of the modern Whig ministries is in the post-historical period. We have not yet enough of contemporary evidence to be sure of its details; years must pass before the memoir-writers can accumulate. But in spirit the tale is doubtless accurate: Lord Grey did not wish to make Mr. Brougham Lord Chancellor, and Mr. Brougham refused any inferior place as beneath his merits and his influence. The first Whig ministry were indeed in a position of some difficulty. The notion that a successful Opposition, as such, should take the reins of administration, has been much derided: "Sir," said a skeptic on this part of constitutional government, "I would as soon choose for a new coachman the man who shied stones best at my old one!" and without going the length of such critics, it must be allowed that the theory may

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produce odd results, when the persons summoned by their victory to assume office have been for many years in Opposition. The party cannot have acquired official habits; the traditions of business cannot be known to them; their long course of Opposition will have forced into leadership men hardly fitted for placid government. There is said to have been much of this feeling when Lord Grey's ministry were installed: it seemed as if that "old favorite of the public," Mr. Buckstone, were called to license plays; grave Englishmen doubted the gravity of the administration. To make Lord Brougham Chancellor was therefore particularly inconvenient: he was too mobile; you could not fancy him droning. He had attacked Lord Eldon during many years, of course; but did he know law? He was a most active person: would he sit *still* upon the woolsack? Of his inattention to his profession, men circulated idle tales. "Pity he hadn't known a little law, and then he would have known a little of everything," was the remark of one who certainly only knows one thing. A more circumstantial person recounted that when Brougham had been a pupil of Sir Nicholas Tindal in the Temple, an uncle of his, having high hopes of his ability, asked the latter, "I hope my nephew is giving himself up, soul and body, to his profession?" "I do not know anything," replied the distinct special pleader, "as to his *soul*, but his body is very seldom in my chambers." Putting aside with contempt this surface of tales, it could not be denied that Mr. Brougham's practice at the bar, large and lucrative as it was, immense as was the energy required to maintain it at the same time with his other labors, had yet not shown him to possess the finest discretion, the most delicate tact of the advocate. Mr. Scarlett stole verdicts away from him. "He strikes hard, sir," said an attorney; "but he strikes wrong." His appointment as Chancellor scarcely strengthened the ministry of the time: Mr. Brougham was a hero, Lord Brougham was a

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"necessity," — it was like Mr. Disraeli being Chancellor of the Exchequer.

After the lapse of years, and with the actual facts before us, it is not difficult to see how far these anticipations have been falsified and how far they have been justified by the result. All the notions as to Lord Brougham's ignorance of law may at once be discarded: a man of his general culture and vigorous faculties, with a great memory and much experience in forensic business, is no more likely to be ignorant of the essential bookwork of law than a tailor to be ignorant of scissors and seams. A man in business must be brought in contact with it, a man of mind cannot help grasping it: no one now questions that Lord Brougham was and is a lawyer of adequate attainments. But at the same time, the judgments which supply the conclusive proof of this — the complete refutation of earlier cavilers — also would lead us to deny him the praise of an absolutely judicial intellect. Great judges may be divided into two classes: judges for the parties, and judges for the lawyers. The first class of these are men who always decide the particular case before them rightly; who have a nice insight into all that concerns it; are acute discerners of fact, accurate weighers of testimony, just discriminators of argument. Lord Lyndhurst is perhaps as great a judge in this kind as it is easy to fancy; if a wise man had a good cause, he would prefer its being tried before Lyndhurst to its being tried before any one else. For the "parties," if they were to be considered in litigation, no more would be needed. By law students, however, and for the profession, something more is desired: they like to find, in a judicial decision, not only a correct adjustment of the particular dispute in court, but also an ample exposition of principles applicable to other disputes. The judge who is peculiarly exact in detecting the precise peculiarities of the case before him will be very apt to decide only what is essential to —

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absolutely needed by — that case: his delicate discrimination will see that nothing else is necessary; he will not bestow conclusions on after generations; he will let posterity decide its own controversies. A judge of different kind has a professional interest in what comes before him: it is in his eyes not a pitiful dispute whether A or B is entitled to a miserable field, but a glorious opportunity of deciding some legal controversy on which he has brooded for years, and on which he has a ready-made conclusion. Accordingly, his judgments are in the nature of essays. They are in one sense applicable to the matter in hand, — they decide it correctly; but they go so much into the antecedents of the controversy, give so much of principle, that the particular facts seem a little lost, — the general doctrine fills the attention. No one can read a judgment of the late Lord Cottenham without feeling that it fixed the law on the matter in hand upon a defined basis for future years; very likely he finds an authority for the case which has occurred in his practice: he does not stay to inquire whether the litigants appreciated the learning; perhaps they did not, — possibly they would have preferred that a more exclusive prominence should be given to themselves. Now, Lord Brougham has neither of these qualities: his intellect wants the piercing precision which distinguishes the judge — the unerring judge — of the case then present; and though competently learned, he has never been absorbed in his profession as a judge of "principle" almost always must be. A man cannot provide a dogma suiting all the cases of the past, and deciding all the cases for the future, without years of patient reflection; his mind must be stored with doctrines: no one can fancy this of Lord Brougham. He is not to be thought of as giving still attention to technical tenets, years of brooding consideration to an abstract jurisprudence. Accordingly, though an adequate, and in his time — for his speed cleared off arrears — a most useful judge, he cannot

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be said to attain the first rank in the judicial scale; and such we believe is the estimation of the world.

Of the political duties of the Chancellor, and Lord Brougham's performance of them, it is not easy to speak. Many of them are necessarily secret, and the history of those times cannot yet be written. That he showed wonderful energy, zeal, and power, no one can doubt; nor that the essential defects of his character soon showed him but little qualified for an administrator. In the year 1802, Francis Horner anticipated that if an active career were opened to Brougham, he would show a want of prudence and moderation;* and it is curious to read, as a commentary on it, what the Duke of Wellington wrote to Sir R. Peel on the 15th of November, 1834:—"His Majesty . . . mentioned that Lord Brougham† had threatened that he would not put the great seal to a commission to prorogue the Parliament;" and afterwards correcting himself, "It appears that Lord Brougham did not make the threat that he would not prorogue the Parliament, but that Lord Melbourne said here that he was in such a state of excitement that he might take that course."‡ We must wait for Lord Brougham's memoirs before we know the exact history of that time; but all the glimpses we get of it show the same picture of wildness and eccentricity.

The times—the most nearly revolutionary times which England has long seen—were indeed likely to try an excitable temperament to the utmost; but at the same time they afforded scope to a brilliant manager of men, which only such critical momentary conjunctures can do. Mr. Roebuck gives a curious instance of this:—

*Letter to James Loch, Nov. 7, 1802 ("Memoirs of Horner," Vol. i.):—"Should an active scene be opened to Brougham, . . . I should be afraid of his being deficient in prudence."

†The editors of Sir R. Peel's Memoirs have left this name in blank; but if they had wished it not to be known, they should have suppressed the passage. Everybody knows who held the great seal at that time.—B.

‡Peel Memoirs, Part ii.

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"The necessity of a dissolution had long been foreseen, and decided on by the ministers, but the King had not yet been persuaded to consent to so bold a measure; and now the two chiefs of the administration were about to intrude themselves into the royal closet, not only to advise and ask for a dissolution, but to request the King on the sudden — on this very day, and within a few hours — to go down and put an end to his Parliament in the midst of the session, and with all the ordinary business of the session yet unfinished. The bolder mind of the Chancellor took the lead, and Lord Grey anxiously solicited him to *manage* the King on the occasion. So soon as they were admitted, the Chancellor, with some care and circumlocution, propounded to the King the object of the interview they had sought. The startled monarch no sooner understood the drift of the Chancellor's somewhat periphrastic statement than he exclaimed in wonder and anger against the very idea of such a proceeding. 'How is it possible, my lords, that I can after this fashion repay the kindness of Parliament to the Queen and myself? They have just granted me a most liberal civil list, and to the Queen a splendid annuity in case she survives me.' The Chancellor confessed that they had, as regarded his Majesty, been a liberal and wise Parliament, but said that nevertheless their further existence was incompatible with the peace and safety of the kingdom. Both he and Lord Grey then strenuously insisted upon the absolute necessity of their request, and gave his Majesty to understand that this advice was by his ministers unanimously resolved on; and that they felt themselves unable to conduct the affairs of the country in the present condition of the Parliament. This last statement made the King feel that a general resignation would be the consequence of a further refusal. Of this, in spite of his secret wishes, he was at the moment really afraid; and therefore he, by employing petty excuses and suggesting small and temporary difficulties, soon began to show that he was about to yield. 'But, my lords, nothing is prepared; the great officers of state are not summoned.' 'Pardon me, sir,' said the Chancellor, bowing with profound apparent humility, 'we have taken the great liberty of giving them to understand that your Majesty commanded their attendance at the proper hour.' — 'But, my lords, the crown and the robes, and other things needed, are not prepared.' 'Again I most humbly entreat your Majesty's pardon for my boldness,' said the Chancellor: 'they are all prepared and ready, the proper officers being desired to attend in proper form and time.' — 'But, my lords,' said the King, reiterating the form in which he put his objection, 'you know the thing is wholly impossible: the guards, the troops, have had no

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orders, and cannot be ready in time.' This objection was in reality the most formidable one: the orders to the troops on such occasions emanate always directly from the king, and no person but the king can in truth command them for such service; and as the Prime Minister and daring Chancellor well knew the nature of royal susceptibility on such matters, they were in no slight degree doubtful and anxious as to the result. The Chancellor therefore, with some real hesitation, began again as before, 'Pardon me, sir, — we know how bold the step is that, presuming on your great goodness, and your anxious desire for the safety of your kingdom and happiness of your people, we have presumed to take: I have given orders, and the troops are ready.' The King started in serious anger, flamed red in the face, and burst forth with — 'What, my lords, have you dared to act thus? Such a thing was never heard of. You, my Lord Chancellor, ought to know that such an act is treason, — high treason, my lord.' 'Yes, sir,' said the Chancellor, 'I do know it. and nothing but my thorough knowledge of your Majesty's goodness, of your paternal anxiety for the good of your people, and my own solemn belief that the safety of the state depends upon this day's proceedings, could have emboldened me to the performance of so unusual, and in ordinary circumstances so improper a proceeding. In all humility I submit myself to your Majesty, and am ready in my own person to bear all the blame and receive all the punishment which your Majesty may deem needful; but I again entreat your Majesty to listen to us and to follow our counsel, and as you value the security of your crown and the peace of your realms, to yield to our most earnest solicitations.' After some further expostulations by both his ministers, the King cooled down and consented. Having consented, he became anxious that everything should be done in the proper manner, and gave minute directions respecting the ceremonial. The speech to be spoken by him at the prorogation was ready prepared and in the Chancellor's pocket. To this he agreed, desired that everybody might punctually attend, and dismissed his ministers for the moment with something between a menace and a joke upon the audacity of their proceeding."*

*"History of the Whig Ministry of 1830," Vol. ii., Chap. i. But see the "Correspondence of William IV. with Earl Grey," which proves this account to be mere wild romance; one of the chromatic reminiscences of Brougham, from whom Mr. Roebuck (his intimate friend) got all his "secret" material, and who possibly found it hard to keep his memory and his imagination separate. Lord Campbell (in "Lives of the Lord Chancellors," Chap. ccxxvii.) says the account is "utterly fabulous," and "violates probability too much to be considered artistically good." — Ed.

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With the fall of Lord Melbourne's first administration terminated Lord Brougham's administrative career. As every one knows, on the defeat of Sir Robert Peel and the subsequent return of the Whigs to power, he was not invited to resume office; since that time — for now more than twenty years — he has had to lead the life in general the most trying to political reputation, perhaps to real character, and more than any other alien to the character of his mind and the tendencies of his nature. We have had many recent instances how difficult it is to give what is variously termed an "independent support" and a "friendly opposition," to a Government of which you approve the general tendencies but are inclined to criticize the particular measures. The Peelites and Lord John Russell have for several years been in general in this position, and generally with a want of popular sympathy: as they agree with the Government in principle, they cannot take, by way of objection, what the country considers broad points. Their suggestions of detail seem petty and trivial to others, — the public hardly think of such things; but men who have long considered a subject, who have definite ideas and organized plans, can scarcely help feeling an eager interest in the smallest minutiæ of the mode of dealing with it. Sometimes they discern a real importance undiscerned by those less attentive; more commonly, perhaps, they fancy there is something peculiarly felicitous in contrivances settled by themselves and congenial to their habits or their notions. Lord Brougham was in a position to feel this peculiarly: the various ideas which he had struggled for in earlier life were successful one by one; the hundred reforms he suggested were carried, the hundred abuses he had denounced were abolished; the world which *was*, was changed to the world which *is* — but it was not changed by him. That he should have been favorably disposed to the existing Liberal administrations was not likely: the

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separation was too recent, perhaps too abrupt.* An eager and excitable disposition is little likely to excel in the measured sentences, the chosen moments, the polished calm of the *frondeur*. Accordingly, the life of Brougham for many years has not been favorable to his fame. On particular occasions, as on the abolition of negro apprenticeship,† he might attain something of his former power; but in general his position has been that of the agitator whose measure is being substantially carried, yet with differences of detail aggravating to his temper and annoying to his imagination. Mr. Cobden described Sir Robert Peel's mode of repealing the Corn Laws, with the microscopic sliding scale for three years, as seventeen-and-sixpence on the demand of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and good security for the other half-crown; yet excitable men at that very moment clamored for the last half-crown, — they could not bear the modification, the minute difference from that on which they had set their hearts. We must remember this in relation to what is now most familiar to us in the life of Lord Brougham. To a man so active, to be out of action is a pain which few can appreciate; that other men should enter into your labors is not pleasant, that they should be Canningites does not make it any better. We have witnessed many escapades of Lord Brougham; we perhaps hardly know his temptations and his vexations.

Such is the bare outline of the career of Lord Brougham: a life of early, broken, various agitation; a short interval of ordinary administration, — occurring, however, at a time singularly extraordinary; a long old age secluded from the actual conduct of affairs, and driven to distinguish itself by miscellaneous objection and diversified sarcasm. Singular stories of eccentricity and excitement, even of something

*See letter of July 20, 1838, from Macaulay to Macvey Napier; quoted in Trevelyan's "Life of Macaulay," Chap. vii. — ED.

†Feb. 20, 1838.

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more than either of these, darken these latter years: on these we must not dwell. There are many aspects of Brougham's varied character, a few of which we should notice by themselves.

The most connected with his political life is his career as a law reformer. We have spoken of his early labors on this subject: we have said that few men who have devoted themselves to nothing else have exposed so many abuses, propounded so many remedies; that one of his early motions is a schedule of half, and much more than half, that has been or will be done upon a large portion of the subject. But here praise must end: the completed, elaborated reforms by which Lord Brougham will be known to posterity are few, are nothing in comparison with his power, his industry, and his opportunities. There is nothing, perhaps, for which he is so ill qualified: the bold, vehement man who exposes an abuse has rarely the skillful, painful, dissecting power which expunges it. Lord Brougham once made a speech on conveyancing: "I should not," said on the next day an eminent professor of that art, "like him to draw a deed relating to my property." A law reformer, in order that his work may be perfect, requires the conveyancing abilities: he must be able to bear in mind the whole topic, to draw out what is necessary of it on paper, to see what is necessary, to discriminate the rights of individuals, to distinguish with even metaphysical nicety the advantage he would keep from the abuse he would destroy; he must elaborate enacting clauses which will work in the complicated future, repealing clauses which will not interfere with the complicated machinery of the past; his mind must be the mind of a codifier. A rushing man, like Lord Brougham, cannot hope to have this. A still and patient man, in quiet chambers, apt in niceties, anxious by temperament, precise in habit, putting the last extreme of perfection on whatever he may attempt, is the man for the employment: you must not

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expect this quiet precision from an agitator; there is the same difference as that between the hard-striking pugilist and the delicate amputating operator.

The same want of repose has impaired his excellence in a pursuit to which, at first sight, it seems much less needful, — the art of oratory. We are apt to forget that oratory is an imaginative art. From our habits of business, the name of "rhetoric" has fallen into disrepute: our greatest artists strive anxiously to conceal their perfection in it; they wish their address in statement to be such that the effect seems to be produced by that which is stated, and not by the manner in which it is stated. But not the less on that account is there a real exercise of the imagination in conceiving of the events of a long history, in putting them forward in skillful narration, each fact seeming by nature to fall into its place, all the details appearing exactly where they should, — a group, to borrow a metaphor from another art, collecting itself from straggling and desultory materials. Still more evidently is the imagination requisite in expressing deep emotions — even common emotions — or in describing noble objects. Now, it seems to be a law of the imagination that it only works in a mind of stillness; the noise and crush of life jar it. "No man," it has been said, "can say, 'I *will* compose poetry':"* he must wait until from a brooding, half-desultory inaction, poetry may arise, like a gentle mist, delicately and of itself.

> "I waited for the train at Coventry;
> I hung with grooms and porters on the bridge,
> To watch the three tall spires; and there I shaped
> The city's ancient legend into this."†

Lord Brougham would not have waited so: he would have rushed up into the town; he would have suggested an improvement, talked the science of the bridge, explained its history to the natives; the quiet

* Shelley. See Vol. I., 119-20.

† Tennyson, "Godiva."

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race would think twenty people had been there. And of course, in some ways this is admirable: such life and force are rare; even the "grooms and porters" would not be insensible to such an aggressive intelligence, so much *knocking* mind. But in the mean time, no lightly touched picture of old story would have arisen on his imagination: the "city's legend" would have been thrust out; the "fairy frostwork" of the fancy would have been struck away; there would have been talk on the schooling of the porter's eldest boy. The rarity of great political oratory arises in a great measure from this circumstance. Only those engaged in the jar of life have the material for it; only those withdrawn into a brooding imagination have the faculty for it. M. de Lamartine has drawn a striking picture of one who had the opportunity of action and the dangerous faculty of leisure:—

"Vergniaud s'enivrait dans cette vie d'artiste, de musique, de déclamation et de plaisirs; il se pressait de jouir de sa jeunesse, comme s'il eût le pressentiment qu'elle serait sitôt cueillie. Ses habitudes étaient méditatives et paresseuses. Il se levait au milieu du jour; il écrivait peu et sur des feuilles éparses; il appuyait le papier sur ses genoux comme un homme pressé qui se dispute le temps; il composait ses discours lentement dans ses rêveries, et les retenait à l'aide de notes dans sa mémoire; il polissait son éloquence à loisir, comme le soldat polit son arme au repos."*

This is not the picture of one who is to attain eminence in stirring and combative times. Harsher men prevailed; a mournful fate swallowed up Vergniaud's delicate fancies. He died because he was idle; but he was great because he was idle. Idleness with such minds is only the name for the passive enjoyment of a justly moving imagination.

We should only weary our readers with a repetition of what has been said a hundred times already, if we tried to explain that Lord Brougham has nothing of this. His merit is, that he was never idle in his life; he must not complain if he has the

* "Histoire des Girondins," Book xviii., § iv. See page 88.

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disadvantage of it also. That he was a most effective speaker in his great time is of course undoubted: his power of sarcasm, his amazing readiness, his energetic vigor of language made him, if not a very persuasive, at least a most formidable orator; his endless animation must tell even to excess upon his audience. But he has not acted wisely for his fame in publishing his speeches: they have the most unpardonable of all faults, — the fault of dullness; it is scarcely possible to read them. Doubtless, at the time their influence was considerable; they may even have been pleasant, as you like to watch the play of a vicious horse: but now, removed from the hearing of the speaker's voice, out of the way of the motions of his face and the glare of his eye, even their evil-speaking loses its attractiveness, — the sarcasm seems blunt, the denunciation heavy. They are crowded with a detail which may have been (though acute observers say it was not) attractive at the time, but which no one can endure now. Not only do you feel that you are bored, but you are not sure that you are instructed: an agitator's detail is scarcely to be trusted; his facts may be right, but you must turn historian in order to test them, you must lead a life of state papers and old letters to know if they are true. It is perhaps possible for the imagination of man to give an interest to any considerable action of human life, — a firmly drawing hand may conduct us through the narration, an enhancing touch enliven the details; but to achieve this with contested facts in a combative life is among the rarest operations of a rare power, — the imagination has few tasks so difficult. To Lord Brougham least of all has it been possible to attract men by the business detail and cumbrous aggressions of the last age: his tone is too harsh; he has shattered his contemporaries, but he will not charm posterity.

Lord Brougham has wished to be known not only as an orator, but as a writer on oratory: he has

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written a "Discourse on Ancient Oratory," recommending, and very deservedly, its study to those who would now excel in the art. And there is no denying that he has rivaled the great Greek orator at least in one of his characteristic excellences: there is no more manly book in the world than Brougham's Speeches; he always "calls a spade a spade"; the rough energy strikes; we have none of the tawdry metaphor or half-real finery of the inferior orators; there is not a simile which a man of sense should not own. Nevertheless, we are inclined to question whether his studies on ancient oratory, especially on the great public oration of Demosthenes, have been entirely beneficial to him. These masterly productions were, as every one knows, the eager expression of an intense mind on questions of the best interest; they have accordingly the character of vehemence. Speaking on subjects which he thought involved the very existence of his country, he could not be expected to speak very temperately; he did not and could not admit that there was fair ground for difference of opinion; that an equally patriotic person, after proper consideration, could by possibility arrive at an opposite conclusion. The circumstances of the parliamentary orator in this country are quite different: a man cannot discuss the dowry of the Princess Royal, the conditions of the Bank Charter, as if they were questions of existence. All questions arising now present masses of fact, antecedents in blue-books, tabulated statistics, on which it is impossible that there should not be a necessity for an elaborate inquiry, that there should not be discrepancy of judgment after that inquiry. The Demosthenic vehemence is out of place; the calm didactic exposition, almost approaching to that of the lecturer, is more efficacious than the intense appeal of an eager orator. That "Counsellor Broom was all in a fume" is a line in one of the best ludicrous poems of a time rather fertile in such things. On points of detail it

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is ridiculous to be in a passion; on matters of business it is unpersuasive to be enthusiastic; even on topics less technical, the Greek oratory is scarcely a model to be imitated precisely. A certain nonchalant ease pervades our modern world: we affect an indifference we scarcely feel; our talk is light almost to affectation, our best writing is the same, — we suggest rather than elaborate, hint rather than declaim. The spirit of the ancient world was very different: the tendency of its conversation probably was to a rhetorical formality, a haranguing energy; certainly it is the tendency of its written style.

"With every allowance," says Colonel Mure, "for the peculiar genius of the age in which the masterpieces of Attic prose were produced, — a consideration which must always have a certain weight in literary judgments, — still, the impartial modern critic cannot but discern in this pervading rhetorical tone a defect, perhaps the only serious defect of the classical Greek style. . . . It is certainly not natural for the historian or the popular essayist to address his readers in the same tone in which the defender of a client or the denouncer of a political opponent addresses a public assembly."*

So great a change in the general world, in the audience to be spoken to, requires a change in the speaker: the light touch of Lord Palmerston is more effective than the most elaborated sentences of a formal rhetorician. Of old, when conversation and writing were half oratorical, oratory might be very oratorical; now that conversation is very conversational, oratory must be a little conversational. In real life, Lord Brougham has too much of the orator's tact not to be half aware of this; but his teaching forgets it.

That Lord Brougham should have adopted a theory enjoining vehemence in oratory is an instance to be cited by those who hold that a man's creed is a justification for his inclinations. He is by nature overvehement; and what is worse, it is not vehemence of

* "History of the Language and Literature of Ancient Greece," Vol. iv., Chap. ii., § 17.

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the best kind, — there is something of a scream about it. People rather laughed at his kneeling to beseech the peers.* No one is sure that there is real feeling in what he reads and hears: it seems like a machine going. Lord Cockburn has an odd anecdote: — An old judge,† who loved dawdling, disliked the "discomposing qualities" of Brougham; "his revenge . . . consisted in sneering at Brougham's eloquence, by calling it or him *the Harangue*. 'Well, gentlemen, what did *the Harangue* say next? Why, it said this' (misstating it); 'but here, gentlemen, *the Harangue* was most plainly wrong and not intelligible."‡ We have some feeling for the old judge: if you take a speech of Brougham and read it apart from his voice, you have half a notion that it is a gong going, eloquence by machinery, an incessant talking *thing*.

It is needless to point out how completely an excitable ungenial nature, such as we have so much spoken of, incapacitates Lord Brougham for abstract philosophy. His works on that subject are sufficiently numerous, but we are not aware that even his most ardent admirers have considered them as works of really the first class. It would not be difficult to extract from the "Political Philosophy," which is probably the best of them, singular instances of inconsistency and of confusion. The error was in his writing them: he who runs may *read*, but it does not seem likely he will think; the brooding disposition, and the still, investigating intellect, are necessary for consecutive reasonings on delicate philosophy.

The same qualities, however, fit a man for the acquisition of general information: a man who is always rushing into the street will become familiar with the street; one who is forever changing from subject to subject will not become *painfully* acquainted with any

* Not to reject the Reform Bill. Speech of Oct. 7, 1831. — ED.

† Lord Eskgrove.

‡ "Memorials of his Time," Chap. ii. As Bagehot has left the *dialect* out of this anecdote, I so leave it. — ED.

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one, but he will know the outsides of them all and the road from each to the other. Accordingly, all the descriptions of Lord Brougham, even in his earliest career, speak of his immense information. Mr. Wilberforce, in perhaps the earliest printed notice of him, recommended Mr. Pitt to employ him in a diplomatic capacity, on account of his familiarity with languages and the other kinds of necessary knowledge.* He began by writing on porisms; only the other day he read a paper on some absurdities imputed to the integral calculus, in French, at Paris. It would be in the highest degree tedious to enumerate all the subjects he knows something of. Of course an extreme correctness cannot be expected: "the most *mis*informed man in Europe" is a phrase of satire; yet even in its satire it conveys a compliment to Brougham's information.

An especial interest in physical science may be remarked in Brougham, as in most men of impressible minds in his generation. He came into life when the great discoveries in our knowledge of the material world were either just made or were on the eve of being made; the enormous advances which have been actually made in material civilization were half anticipated. There was a vague hope in science; the boundaries of the universe, it was hoped, would move. Active, ardent minds were drawn with extreme hope to the study of new moving power; a smattering of science was immeasurably less common then than now, but it exercised a stronger dominion and influenced a higher class of genius,—it was new, and men were sanguine. In the present day, younger men are perhaps repelled into the opposite extreme: we live among the marvels of science, but we know how little they change us; the essentials of life are what they were; we go by the train, but we are not improved at our journey's end. We have railways and canals and manufactures,—excellent things, no

*Letter of Oct. 25, 1805; Wilberforce Correspondence, Vol. I.

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doubt, but they do not touch the soul; somehow they seem to make life more superficial. With a half-wayward dislike, some in the present generation have turned from physical science and material things. "We have tried these, and they fail," is the feeling: "what is the heart of man the better for galvanic engines and hydraulic presses? Leave us to the old poetry and the old philosophy: there is at least a life and a mind." It is the day after the feast: we do not care for its delicacies; we are rather angry at its profusion; we are cross to hear it praised. Men who came into active life half a century ago were the guests invited to the banquet: they did not know what was coming, but they heard it was something gorgeous and great; they expected it with hope and longing. The influence of this feeling was curiously seen in the Useful Knowledge Society, the first great product of the educational movement in which Lord Brougham was the most ardent leader. No one can deny that their labors were important, their intentions excellent, the collision of mind which they created most beneficial. Still, looking to their well-known publications, beyond question the knowledge they particularly wished to diffuse is, according to the German phrase, "factish." Hazlitt said they "confounded a knowledge of useful things with useful knowledge."* An idea — half unconscious — pervades them, that a knowledge of the detail of material knowledge, even too of the dates and shell of outside history, is extremely important to the mass of men; that all will be well when we have a cosmical ploughboy and a mob that knows hydrostatics. We shall never have it; but even if we could, we should not be much the better. The heart and passions of men are moved by things more within their attainment; the essential nature is stirred by the essential life, — by the real actual existence of love and hope and character, and by the real literature which takes in its spirit and

* "On Classical Education," No. 2 of the "Round Table."

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which is in some sort its undefecated essence. Thirty years ago the preachers of this now familiar doctrine were unknown; nor was their gospel for a moment the one perhaps most in season. It was good that there should be a more diffused knowledge of the material world; and it was good, therefore, that there should be partisans of matter, believers in particles, zealots for tissue, who were ready to incur any odium and any labor that a few more men might learn a few more things. How a man of incessant activity should pass easily to such a creed is evident: he would see the obvious ignorance; the less obvious argument which shows that this ignorance, in great measure inevitable, was of far less importance than would be thought at first sight, would never be found by one who moved so rapidly.

We have gone through now, in some hasty way, most of the lights in which Lord Brougham has been regarded by his contemporaries. There is still another character in which posterity will especially think of him: he is a great memoirist. His "Statesmen of George III." contains the best sketches of the political men of his generation, one with another, which the world has or is likely to have. He is a fine painter of the exterior of human nature. Some portion of its essence requires a deeper character; another portion, more delicate sensations: but of the rough appearance of men as they struck him in the law-court and in Parliament, — of the great debater struggling with his words, the stealthy advocate gliding into the confidence of the audience, the great judge unraveling all controversies and deciding by a well-weighed word all complicated doubts,* — of such men as these, and of men engaged in such tasks as these, there is no greater painter perhaps than Brougham. His eager aggressive disposition brought him into collision with conspicuous men; his skill in the obvious parts of human nature has made him

* Fox, Scarlett, Mansfield.

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understand them. A man who has knocked his head against a wall — if such an illustration is to be hazarded — will learn the nature of the wall; those who have passed fifty years in managing men of the world will know their external nature, and if they have literary power enough will describe it. In general, Lord Brougham's excellence as a describer of character is confined to men whom he had thus personally and keenly encountered: the sketches of the philosophers of the eighteenth century, of French statesmen, are poor and meager; he requires evidently the rough necessities of action to make him observe. There is, however, a remarkable exception: he preserves a singularly vivid recollection of the instructors of his youth; he nowhere appears so amiable as in describing them. He is over-partial, no doubt; but an old man may be permitted to reverence, if he can reverence, his schoolmaster.

This is all that our limits will permit us to say of Lord Brougham; on so varied a life, at least on a life with such varied pursuits, one might write to any extent. The regular biographer will come in after years; it is enough for a mere essayist to sketch or strive to sketch, in some rude outline, the nature of the man.

TRANSLATION OF EXTRACT ON PAGE 80. — "Vergniaud was intoxicated by this life of art, music, oratory, and entertainments; he crowded enjoyment into his youth, as if he had a presentiment that he should be harvested early. His habits were meditative and indolent. He rose in the middle of the day; he wrote little and on stray sheets, holding the paper on his knees like a man hard pressed for time; he composed his speeches sluggishly during reveries, retaining them in his memory by the aid of notes; he polished his eloquence at leisure, as a soldier polishes his weapons during peace."

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*MR. GLADSTONE.**

(1860.)

We believe that Quarterly essayists have a peculiar mission in relation to the characters of public men: we believe it is their duty to be personal. This idea may seem ridiculous to some of our readers; but let us consider the circumstances carefully. We allow that personality abounds already, that the names of public men are forever on our lips, that we never take up a newspaper without seeing them: but this incessant personality is wholly fragmentary; it is composed of chance criticism on special traits, of fugitive remarks on temporary measures, of casual praise and casual blame. We can expect little else from what is written in haste or is spoken without limitation. Public men must bear this criticism as they can; those whose names are perpetually in men's mouths must not be pained if singular things are sometimes said of them: still, *some* deliberate truth should be spoken of our statesmen, and if Quarterly essayists do not speak it, who will? We fear it will remain unspoken.

Mr. Gladstone is a problem, and it is very remarkable that he should be a problem,—we have had more than ordinary means for judging of him. He has been in public life for seven-and-twenty years; he has filled some of the most conspicuous offices in the state; he has been a distinguished member of the Tory party, he *is* a distinguished member of the Liberal party; he has brought forward many measures; he has passed many years in independent Opposition,

* Speech of the Chancellor of the Exchequer on the Finance of the Year and the Treaty of Commerce with France. Delivered in the House of Commons on Friday, Feb. 10, 1860. Corrected by the Author.

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which is unquestionably the place most favorable to the display of personal peculiarities in Parliament; he is the greatest orator in the House of Commons; he never allows a single important topic to pass by without telling us what he thinks of it: and yet, with all these data, we are all of us in doubt about him. What he will do and what he will think, still more, why he will do it and why he will think it, are *quæstiones vexatæ* at every political conjuncture. At the very last ministerial crisis, when the Government of Lord Derby was on the verge of extinction, when every voice on Lord John's resolution was of critical importance, no one knew till nearly the last hour how Mr. Gladstone would vote, and in the end he voted against his present colleagues.* The House of Commons gossips are generally wrong about him. Nor is the uncertainty confined to parliamentary divisions: it extends to his whole career. Who can calculate his future course? Who can tell whether he will be the greatest orator of a great administration; whether he will rule the House of Commons; whether he will be, as his gifts at first sight mark him out to be, our greatest statesman? or whether, below the gangway, he will utter unintelligible discourses; will aid in destroying many ministries and share in none; will pour forth during many hopeless years a bitter, a splendid, and a vituperative eloquence?

We do not profess that we can solve all the difficulties that are suggested even by the superficial consideration of a character so exceptional, — we do not aspire to be prophets; Mr. Gladstone's destiny perplexes us perhaps as much as it perplexes our readers. But we think that we can explain much of his past career; that many of his peculiarities are not so unaccountable as they seem; that a careful study will

*This refers to the Parliamentary Reform Bill brought forward by Lord Derby's Government in 1859. Lord John Russell on March 21 moved an amendment that the bill was unjust and impolitic as not going far enough, which was carried on March 31, Mr. Gladstone voting against it: Lord Derby dissolved Parliament and appealed (unsuccessfully) to the country. — ED.

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show us the origin of most of them; that we may hope to indicate some of the material circumstances and conditions on which his future course depends, though we should not be so bold as to venture to foretell it.

During the discussion on the Budget, an old Whig who did not approve of it, but who had to vote for it, muttered of its author, "Ah, Oxford on the surface, *but* Liverpool below." And there is truth in the observation, though not in the splenetic sense in which it was intended: Mr. Gladstone does combine, in a very curious way, many of the characteristics which we generally associate with the place of his education and many of those which we usually connect with the place of his birth. No one can question the first part of the observation: no man has through life been more markedly an Oxford man than Mr. Gladstone. His "Church and State," published after he had been several years in public life, was instinct with the very spirit of the Oxford of that time; his "Homer," published the other day, bears nearly equal traces of the school in which he was educated. Even in his ordinary style there is a tinge half theological, half classical, which recalls the studies of his youth. Many Oxford men much object to the opinions of their distinguished representative; but none of them would deny that he remarkably embodies the peculiar results of the peculiar teaching of the place.

And yet he has something which his collegiate training never would have given him, which it is rather remarkable it has not taken away from him. There is much to be said in favor of the University of Oxford; no one can deny to it very great and very peculiar merits: but certainly it is not an exciting place, and its education operates as a narcotic rather than as a stimulant. Most of its students devote their lives to a single profession, and we may observe among them a kind of sacred torpidity. In many rural parsonages there are men of very great

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cultivation, who are sedulous in their routine duties, who attend minutely to the ecclesiastical state of the souls in their village, but who are perfectly devoid of general intellectual interests. They have no anxiety to solve great problems, to busy themselves with the speculations of their age, to impress their peculiar theology — for peculiar it is both in its expression and its substance — on the educated mind of their time. Oxford, it has been said, "disheartens a man early;" at any rate, since Newmanism lost Father Newman, few indeed of her acknowledged sons attain decided eminence in our deeper controversies, — Jowett she would repudiate, and Mansel is but applying the weapons of skepticism to the service of credulity. The most characteristic of Oxford men labor quietly, delicately, and let us hope usefully, in a confined sphere; they hope for nothing more and wish for nothing more. Even in secular literature we may observe an analogous tone. The *Saturday Review* is remarkable as an attempt on the part of "university men" to speak on the political topics and social difficulties of the time; and what do they teach us? It is something like this: — "So-and-so has written a tolerable book, and we would call attention to the industry which produces tolerable books. So-and-so has devoted himself to a great subject, and we would observe that the interest now taken in great subjects is very commendable. Such-and-such a lady has delicate feelings, which are desirable in a lady, though we know that they are contrary to the facts of the world. All common persons are doing as well as they can, but it does not come to much after all. All statesmen are doing as ill as they can, and let us be thankful that *that* does not come to much either." We may search and search in vain through this repository of the results of "university teaching" for a single truth which it has established, for a single high cause which it has advanced, for a single deep thought which is to sink into the minds of its readers.

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We have indeed a nearly perfect embodiment of the corrective skepticism of a sleepy intellect. "A B says he has done something, but he has not done it. C D has made a parade of demonstrating this or that proposition, but he does not prove his case: there is one mistake in page 5, and another in page 113. A great history has been written of this or that century, but the best authorities as to that period have not been consulted; which, however, is not very remarkable, as there is nothing in them." We could easily find, if it were needful, many traces of the same indifferent habit, the same apathetic culture, in the more avowed productions of Oxford men. The shrewd eye of Mr. Emerson, stimulated doubtless by the contrast to America, quickly caught the trait: "Ah," says the "languid Oxford gentleman" of his story, "nothing new or true — and no matter!"*

To this, as to every other species of indifferentism, Mr. Gladstone is the antithesis. Oxford has not disheartened *him;* some of his colleagues would say they wished it had, — he is interested in everything he has to do with, and often interested too much. He proposes to put a stamp on contract notes with an † eager earnestness as if the destiny of Europe, here and hereafter, depended upon its enactment. He cannot let anything alone. "Sir," said an old distributer of stamps in Westmoreland, "my head, sir, is worn out. I must resign. The Chancellor, sir, is imposing of things that I can't understand." The world is not well able to understand them either; the public departments break down under the pressure of the industry of their superior. Mr. Gladstone is ready to work as long as his brain will hold together, to make speeches as long as he has utterance (words he is sure to have): but the subordinate officials will not work equally hard, — they have none of the excitement of origination, they will not share the credit of success;

* Essay on Montaigne, in "Representative Men."

† A slip for "as." — ED.

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they do, however, share the discredit of failure. In the high-pressure season of this year's Budget, acts of Parliament have been passed in which essential provisions were not to be found, in which what was intended to be enacted was omitted or exceeded, in which the marginal notes were widely astray of the text. In his literary works Mr. Gladstone is the same. His book on Homer is perhaps the most zealous work which this generation has produced: he has the enthusiasm of a German professor for the scholastic detail, for the exact meaning of word No. 1, for the precise number of times which word No. 2 is used by the poet; he has the enthusiasm of a lover for Helen, the enthusiasm of an orator for the speeches. Of his theological books we need not speak: every reader will recall the curious succession of needless *quæstiunculæ* by which their interest is marred.

Some of this energy Mr. Gladstone probably owes to the place of his birth. Lancashire is sometimes called "America and water": we suspect it is America and very little water. The excessive energy natural to half-educated men who have but a single pursuit cannot, indeed, in any part of England, produce the monstrous results which it occasionally produces in the United States,—it is kept in check by public opinion, by the close vicinity of an educated world; but in its own pursuit, in commerce, we question whether New York itself is more intensely eager than Liverpool,—at any rate, it is difficult to conceive how it can be. Like several other remarkable men whose families belong to the place, Mr. Gladstone has carried into other pursuits the eagerness, the industry—we are loth to say the rashness, but the boldness—which Liverpool men apply to the business of Liverpool; underneath the scholastic polish of his Oxford education he has the speculative hardihood, the eager industry of a Lancashire merchant.

Such is one of the principal peculiarities which Mr. Gladstone's character presents even to a superficial

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observer; but something more than superficial observation is necessary really to understand a character so complicated and so odd. We will touch upon some of the traits which are among the most important; and if our minute analysis has or seems to have some of the painfulness of a vivisection, we would observe that a defect of this kind is in some degree inseparable from the task we have undertaken. We cannot explain the special peculiarities of a singular man of genius without a somewhat elaborate and a half-metaphysical discussion.

It is needless to say that Mr. Gladstone is a great orator. Oratory is one of the pursuits as to which there is no error: the criterion is ready. Did the audience feel? Were they excited? Did they cheer? These questions, and others such as these, can be answered without a mistake. A man who can move the House of Commons — still, after many changes, the most severe audience in the world — must be a great orator; the most sincere admirers and the most eager depreciators of Mr. Gladstone are agreed on this point, and it is almost the only point on which they are agreed.

It will be well, however, to pause upon this characteristic of Mr. Gladstone's genius, and to examine the nature of it rather anxiously, because it seems to afford the true key to some of his most perplexing peculiarities. Mr. Gladstone has, beyond any other man in this generation, what we may call the oratorical *impulse*. We are in the habit of speaking of rhetoric as an "art," and also of oratory as a "faculty"; and in both cases we speak quite truly. No man can speak without a special intellectual gift, and no man can speak well without a special intellectual training; but neither this gift of the intellect nor this education will suffice of themselves, — a man must not only know what to say, he must have a vehement longing to get up and say it. Many persons, rather skeptical persons especially, do not feel this in the

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least; they see before them an audience, a miscellaneous collection of odd-looking men, but they feel no wish to convince them of anything. "Are not they very well as they are? They believe what they have been brought up to believe." "Confirm every man in *his own* manner of conceiving," said one great sage. "A savage among savages is very well,"* remarked another. "You may easily take away one creed and then not be able to implant another; you may succeed in unfitting men for their own purposes without fitting them for your purposes,"—thus thinks the *cui bono* skeptic. Another kind of skeptic is distrustful, and speaks thus:—"I know *I can't* convince these people; if I could, perhaps I would, but I can't. Only look at them! they have all kinds of crotchets in their heads. There is a wooden-faced man in spectacles: how can you convince a wooden-faced man in spectacles? And see that other man with a narrow forehead and compressed lips,—is it any use talking to him? It is of no use; do not hope that mere arguments will impair the prepossessions of nature and the steady convictions of years." Mr. Gladstone would not feel these skeptical arguments: he would get up to speak; he has the *didactic* impulse; he has "the courage of his ideas." He will convince the audience: he knows an argument which will be effective, he has one for one and another for another; he has an enthusiasm which he feels will rouse the apathetic, a demonstration which he thinks must convert the incredulous, an illustration which he hopes will drive his meaning even into the heads of the stolid,—at any rate he will try. He has *a nature*, as Coleridge might have said, towards his audience; he is sure if they only knew what he knows, they would feel as he feels and believe as he believes: and by this he conquers. This living faith, this enthusiasm, this confidence—call it as we will—is an extreme power in

*Windham, Speech on the Poor Laws Bill, April 24, 1807.

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human affairs: one *croyant*, said the Frenchman, is a greater power than fifty *incrédules;* in the composition of an orator, the hope — the credulous hope — that he will convince his audience is the *primum mobile*, it is the primitive incentive which is the spring of his influence and the source of his power. Mr. Gladstone has this incentive in perhaps an excessive and dangerous measure. Whatever may be right or wrong in pure finance, in abstract political economy, it is certain that no one save Mr. Gladstone would have come down with the Budget of 1860 to the Commons of 1860; no other man would have believed that such a proposal would have a chance: yet after the warning — the disheartening warning — of a reluctant Cabinet, Mr. Gladstone came down from a depressing sick-bed, with semi-bronchitis hovering about him, entirely prevailed for the moment, and three parts conquered after all. We will not say that *the world* is given to men of this temperament and this energy; on the contrary, there is often a turn in the tide, — the ovation of the spring may be the prelude to unpopularity in the autumn: but we see that *audiences* are given them; we see that unimpressible men are deeply moved by them, that the driest topics of legislation and finance are for the instant affected by them, that the prolonged effects of that momentary influence may be felt for many years, sometimes for centuries. The orator has a dominion over the critical instant, and the consequences of the decisions taken during that instant may last long after the orator and the audience have both passed away.

Nor is the didactic impulse the only one which is essential to a great political orator, nor is it the only one which Mr. Gladstone has: we say it with respect, but he has the *contentious* impulse. He illustrates the distinction between the pacific and the peaceful. On all great questions, on the controversies of states and empires, Mr. Gladstone is the most pacific of mankind: he hates the very rumor of war; he trusts

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in moral influences; he detests the bare idea of military preparations; he will not believe that preparations are necessary till the enemy is palpable. In the early part of 1853 he did not believe that the Russian war was impending; after the conversations of the Emperor Nicholas with Sir Hamilton Seymour, he proposed to Parliament a scheme for converting some portions of the National Debt, which could only be successful if peace continued, and which after the outbreak of the war failed ignominiously. In 1860, *mutatis mutandis*, he has done the same: he staked his financial reputation upon a fine calculation; he gave us a Budget in which the two ends scarcely met—the Chinese war came, and they no longer meet. We believe that Mr. Gladstone so much hates the bare idea of the possibility of war, that after many warnings, after at least one failure which must have been painful and which should have been instructive, he has refused to take even the contingency of hostilities into his calculations. Some one said he was not only a Christian, but a morbid Christian: he cannot imagine that anything so coarse as war will occur; when it does occur, he has a tendency to disapprove of it as soon as he can. During the Russian war he soon joined, in fact if not in name, the peace-at-all-price party; he exerted his finest reasonings and his most persuasive eloquence against a war which was commenced with his consent. At the present moment no Englishman, not Mr. Bright himself, *feels* so little the impulse to arm; he will not believe in a war till he sees men fighting. He is the most pacific of our statesmen in theory and in policy; when you hear Mr. Gladstone, he is about the most combative. He can bear a good deal about the politics of Europe; but let a man question the fees on vatting, or the change in the game certificate, or the stamp on bills of lading—what melodious thunders of loquacious wrath! The world, he hints, is likely to end at such observations, and it is dreadful that they should be

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made by the honorable member who made them,— "by the honorable member who four years ago said so and so, and five years before that moved—" etc., etc. The number of well-intentioned and tedious persons whom Mr. Gladstone annually scolds into a latent dislike of him must be considerable.

But though we may smile at the minutiæ in which this contentious impulse sometimes shows itself, we must remember that the impulse itself is essential to a great political orator; everywhere in some degree, but in England especially. To be an influential speaker in the House of Commons, a man must be a great debater: he must excel not only in elaborate set speeches, but likewise in quick occasional repartee; no one but a rather contentious person will ever so excel. Mr. Fox, the most genial of men, was asked why he disputed so vehemently about some trifle or other: he said, "I *must* do so,—I can't live without discussion." And this is the temperament of a great debater: it must be a positive pain to him to be silent under questionable assertions, to hear others saying that which he cannot agree with. An indifferent skeptic, such as we formerly spoke of, endures this very easily. He thinks, no doubt, that "What the speaker is saying is quite wrong: but people do not understand what he is saying, very likely they won't understand the answer; besides, we've a majority,— what is the use of arguing when you have a majority? Let us outvote him on the spot, and go to bed." And so, report says, have whips argued to Mr. Gladstone; but he is ever ready,—he takes up the parable of disputation at a quarter past twelve, and goes on till he has exhausted argument, illustration, ingenuity, and research. To hardly any man have both the impulses of the political orator been given in so great a measure: the didactic orator is usually felicitous in exposition only; the great debater is, like Fox, only great when stung to reply by the *œstrus* of contention. But Mr. Gladstone is by nature, by vehement

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overruling nature, great in both arts: he longs to pour forth his own belief; he cannot rest till he has contradicted every one else.

In addition to this oratorical temperament, Mr. Gladstone has in a high degree the most important intellectual talent of an orator,—he has what we may call an "adaptive" mind. He has described this himself better than most people would describe it:—

"Poets of modern times have composed great works in ages that stopped their ears against them. 'Paradise Lost' does not represent the time of Charles II., nor the 'Excursion' the first decades of the present century. The case of the orator is entirely different: his work, from its very inception, is inextricably mixed up with practice; it is cast in the mold offered to him by the mind of his hearers; it is an influence principally received from his audience (so to speak) in vapor, which he pours back upon them in a flood. The sympathy and concurrence of his time is, with his own mind, joint parent of his work. He cannot follow nor frame ideals; his choice is, to be what his age will have him, what it requires in order to be moved by him, or else not to be at all. And as when we find the speeches in Homer, we know that there must have been men who could speak them; so, from the existence of units who could speak them, we know that there must have been crowds who could feel them."*

We may judge of the House of Commons in the same way from the great Budget speech. No one, indeed, half guides, half follows the moods of his audience more quickly, more easily than Mr. Gladstone. There is a little playfulness in his manner, which contrasts with the dryness of his favorite topics and the intense gravity of his earnest character. He has the same sort of control over the minds of those he is addressing that a good driver has over the animals he guides; he feels the minds of his hearers as the driver the mouths of his horses.

The species of intellect that is required for this task is pre-eminently the advocate's intellect. The instrument of oratory, at least of this kind of oratory,

* "Homer," Vol. iii., i. ("Agorè"), page 107.

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is the *argumentum ad hominem:* it is "inextricably mixed up with practice." It argues from the data furnished to him "by the mind of his hearers." He receives his premises from them like a "vapor," and "pours" out his conclusions upon them like "a flood." Such an orator may believe his conclusions, but he can rarely believe them for the reasons which he assigns for them. He may be an enthusiast in his creed, he may be a zealot in his faith, but not the less will he be an advocate in his practice; not the less will he catch at disputable premises because his audience accepts them; not the less will he draw inferences from them which suit his momentary purpose; not the less will he accept the most startling varieties of assertion, for he will imbibe from one audience a different "vapor" of premises from that which he will receive from another; not the less will he have the chameleon-like character which we associate with a consummate advocate; not the less will he be one thing to-day, with the color of one audience upon him; not the less will he be another to-morrow, when he has to address, persuade, and influence some different set of persons.

We scarcely think, with Mr. Gladstone, that this style of oratory is the very highest; though it is very natural that he should think so, for it exactly expresses the oratory in which he is the greatest living master. Mr. Gladstone's conception of oratory, in theory and in practice, is the oratory of Pitt, not the oratory of Chatham or of Burke; it is the oratory of adaptation. We do not deny that this is the kind of oratory which is most generally useful, the only kind which is commonly permissible, the only one which in general would not be a *bore:* but we must remember that there is an eloquence of great principles, which the hearers scarcely heed and do not accept,—such as in its highest parts is the eloquence of Burke; we must remember that there is an eloquence of great passions, of high-wrought intense feeling, which is

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nearly independent of the peculiarities of its audience, because it appeals to our elemental human nature, which is the same or much the same in almost every audience, which is everywhere and always susceptible to the union of vivid genius and eager passion, — such as this last was, if we may trust tradition, the eloquence of Chatham, the source of his rare, magical, and occasional power. Mr. Gladstone has neither of these. Few speakers equally great have left so few passages which can be quoted, so few which embody great principles in such a manner as to be referred to by coming generations. He has scarcely given us a sentence that lives in the memory; nor is his declamation, facile and effective as it always is, the very highest declamation, — it is a nearly perfect expression of intellectualized sentiment, but it wants the volcanic power of primitive passion.

The prominence of advocacy in Mr. Gladstone's mind is in appearance, though not in reality, diminished by the purity and intensity of his zeal; there is an elastic heroism about him. When he begins to speak, we may know that we are going to hear what we shall not agree with; we may believe that the measures he proposes are mischievous; we may smile at the emphasis with which some of their minutiæ are insisted upon: but we inevitably feel that we have left the ordinary earth. We know that high sentiments will be appealed to by one who feels high sentiments; that strong arguments will be strongly stated by one who believes that argument should decide controversy. We know that we are beyond the realm of the patronage secretary; we have left behind us the doctrine that corruption is the ruling power in popular assemblies, that patronage is the purchase-money of power. We are not alleging that in the real world in which we live there is not some truth — more or less of truth — in these lower maxims; but they do not rule in Mr. Gladstone's world. He was not born to be a Secretary of the Treasury; if

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he tried his hand at it, he would perplex the borough attorneys out of their lives. And he *could* not keep the office a month: he would evince a real disgust at detestable requests, and guide with odd impulsiveness the delicate and latent machinery. His natural element is a higher one. He has — and it is one of the springs of great power — a real faith in the higher parts of human nature; he believes, with all his heart and soul and strength, that there *is* such a thing as truth; he has the soul of a martyr with the intellect of an advocate.

Another of Mr. Gladstone's characteristics is an extraordinary love of labor. We have alluded several times to his taste — we might almost say his whimsical taste — for minutiæ: he is ready with whatever detail may be necessary on any subject, no matter of what kind. He covers his greatest schemes with a crowd of irrelevant appendages, till it is difficult to see their outline. The Budget of 1860 was large enough and complicated enough, one would have thought, in its essential irremovable features; but its author did not think so, — he had supplementary provisions respecting game certificates, respecting the transmission of newspapers by the post, respecting "several other minuter changes with which he was almost ashamed to trouble the committee." The labor necessary to all these accessories must have been enormous. Many of the alterations may have — must have — been lying ready in his memory, or in some old note-book, for many years; but the industry to furbish them up, to get them into a practicable or even into a proposable shape, would frighten not only most persons, but most laborious persons. And Mr. Gladstone's energy seems to be strictly intellectual: nothing in his outward appearance indicates the iron physique that often carries inferior men through heavy tasks. Whatever he does that is peculiar, he does by the peculiarity of his mind; he is carried through his work, or seems to be so, by pure will, zeal, and effort.

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The last characteristic of Mr. Gladstone which is very remarkable, or which we shall mention, is his scholastic intellect. We have not much of this in conspicuous men in the present day, but in former times there was a good deal of it; Lord Bacon had something like it in his eye when he spoke of minds which were not "discursive" or skillful in discovering analogies, but were *discriminative* or skillful in detecting differences.* The best scene for training this sort of intellect is the law-court. Lord Bacon must have seen much of it in the work of Gray's Inn when he was young, and traces of the discipline which he then underwent may perhaps be found even in books which were written by him many years afterwards. When, as in positive law, the first principles are fixed, there is no room for the highest originality; the only admissible controversy is whether a particular case comes or does not come within a particular principle. On this point there is room for endless distinctions and eternal hair-splitting. When the principles settled by authority are not entirely consistent, the function of this kind of distinguishing reason is even greater: it has to suggest nice refinements which may reconcile the apparent differences between the principles themselves, as well as to settle the exact relation of the case or the facts to the doctrine of the authorities. Accordingly, the scholastic theologians of mediæval times were the most expert masters of the discriminative ratiocination which the world has ever seen: they had to reconcile the recognized authorities of the Catholic Church — authorities vast in size, and scattered over centuries in time — with one another, with good sense, with the facts of special cases, with the general exigencies of the age. By their labor was formed that acute logic, that subtle if unreal philosophy, which fell at the Reformation, when the authorities of the Catholic Church were no longer conclusive and

* "Novum Organum," Book I., § lv.; but he does not use the word "discriminative." — ED.

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the art of arranging them was no longer important. We have learned to smile at the scholastic distinctions of former times: the inductive philosophy which is now our most conspicuous pursuit does not need them, the popular character of our ordinary discussion does not admit of them. In a free country we must use the sort of argument which plain men understand; and plain men certainly do not appreciate or apprehend scholastic refinements. So at least we should say beforehand: yet Mr. Gladstone is the statesman whose expositions have, for good or for evil, more power than those of any other; his voice is a greater power in the country of plain men than any other man's,—nevertheless, his intellect is of a thoroughly scholastic kind. He can distinguish between any two propositions; he never allowed, he could not allow, that any two were identical. If any one on either side of the House is bold enough to infer anything from anything, Mr. Gladstone is ready to deny that the inference is correct, to suggest a distinction which he says is singularly important, to illustrate an apt subtlety which (in appearance at least) impairs the validity of the deduction. No schoolman could be readier at such work.

We may find the same tendency of mind even more strikingly illustrated in his writings. At the time of the Gorham case,* for example, he wrote a pamphlet on the royal supremacy. For the purposes of that case, it was of the last importance to determine the exact position of the Crown with respect to ecclesiastical affairs, and especially to the offense of heresy. The law at first seems distinct enough on the matter: the 1st of Elizabeth provides "that such jurisdictions, privileges, superiorities, and pre-eminences, spiritual and ecclesiastical, as by any spiritual or ecclesiastical power or authority hath heretofore been or may lawfully be exercised or used for the visitation of the ecclesiastical state and persons, and for

* See Vol. ii., page 368.

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reformation, order, and correction of the same, and of all manner of errors, heresies, schisms, abuses, offenses, contempts, and enormities, shall forever, by authority of this present Parliament, be united and annexed to the imperial Crown of this realm." These words would have seemed distinct and clear to most persons; they would have seemed to give to the Crown all the power it could wish to exercise, all that any spiritual authority had ever "theretofore exercised," all that any temporal authority could ever use. We should think it was clear that Queen Elizabeth would have applied a rather summary method of instruction to any one who attempted to limit the jurisdiction conferred by this enactment. If Mr. Gladstone had lived in the times about which he was writing, he might have had to make a choice between being silent and being punished; but in the times of Queen Victoria he is not subjected to an alternative so painful. He writes securely:—

"We have now before us the terms of the great statute which, from the time it was passed, has been the actual basis of the royal authority in matters ecclesiastical; and I forbear to load these pages by reference to declarations of the Crown, and other public documents less in authority than this act, in order that we may fix our view the more closely upon the expressions of what may fairly be termed a fundamental law in relation to the subject-matter before us.

"The first observation I make is this: There is no evidence in the words which have been quoted that the sovereign is, according to the intention of the statute, the source or fountain-head of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. They have no trace of such a meaning, in so far as it exceeds (and it does exceed) the proposition that this jurisdiction has been by law united or annexed to the Crown.

"I do not now ask what have been the glosses of lawyers, what are the reproaches of polemical writers, or even what attributes may be ascribed to prerogative, independent of statute, and therefore applicable to the Church before as well as after the Reformation. I must for the purposes of this argument assume what I shall never cease to believe until the contrary conclusion is demonstrated by fact: namely, that in the case of the Church, justice is to be administered from the English bench upon the same principles as

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in all other cases; that our judges or our judicial committees are not to be our legislators; and that the statutes of the realm, as they are above the sacred majesty of the Queen, so are they likewise above their ministerial interpreters. It was by statute that the changes in the position of the Church at that great epoch were measured, by statute that the position itself is defined; and the statute, I say, contains no trace of such a meaning as that the Crown either originally was the source and spring of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, or was to become such in virtue of the annexation to it of the powers recited, but simply bears the meaning that it was to be master over its administration."

So that which seems a despotism is gradually pruned down into a vicegerency. All the "superiorities and pre-eminences, spiritual and ecclesiastical," which had ever been lawfully exercised, are restricted to the single function of regulation; and by a judicious elaboration the Crown becomes scarcely the head of the Church, but only the *visitor* and corrector of it, as of several other corporations. We are not now concerned with the royal supremacy, — we have no wish to hint or intimate an opinion on a vast legal discussion: but we *are* concerned with Mr. Gladstone; and we venture to say that a subtler gloss, more scholastically expressed, never fell from lawyer in the present age or from schoolmen in times of old.

The great faculties we have mentioned give Mr. Gladstone, it is needless to say, an extraordinary influence in English politics. England is a country governed mainly by labor and by speech: Mr. Gladstone will work and can speak, and the result is what we see. With a flowing eloquence and a lofty heroism; with an acute intellect and endless knowledge; with courage to conceive large schemes and a voice which will persuade men to adopt those schemes, — it is not singular that Mr. Gladstone is of himself a power in parliamentary life. He can do there what no one else living can do.

But the effect of these peculiar faculties is by no means unmixedly favorable. In almost every one

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of them some faulty tendency is latent, which may produce bad effects, in Mr. Gladstone's case has often done so, perhaps does so still. His greatest characteristic, as we have indicated, is the singular vivacity of his oratorical impulse. But great as is the immediate power which a vehement oratorical propensity, when accompanied by the requisite faculties, secures to the possessor, the advantage of possessing it — or rather of being subject to it — is by no means without an alloy. We have all heard that Paley said he knew nothing against some one *but* that he was a popular preacher; and Paley knew what he was saying. The oratorical impulse is a *disorganizing* impulse; the higher faculties of the mind require a certain calm, and the excitement of oratory is unfavorable to that calm. We know that this is so with the hearers of oratory; we know that they are carried away from their fixed principles, from their habitual tendencies, by a casual and unexpected stimulus; we speak commonly of the "power of the orator": but the orator is subject himself to much the same calamity, — the force which carries away his hearers must first carry away himself; he will not persuade any of his hearers unless he has first succeeded, for the moment at least, in persuading his own mind. Every exciting speech is conceived, planned, and spoken with excitement; the orator feels in his own nerves, even in a greater degree, that electric thrill which he is to communicate to his hearers. The telling ideas take hold of him with a sort of *seizure;* they fasten close upon his brain; he has a sort of passionate impulse to tell them; he hungers, as a Greek would have said, till they are uttered; his mind is full of them. He has the vision of the audience in his mind; until he has persuaded these men of these things, life is tame and its other stimulants are uninteresting. So much excitement is evidently unfavorable to calm reflection and deliberation. Mr. Pitt is said to have thought more of the manner in which his measures would

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strike the House than of the manner in which, when carried, they would work: of course he did, — every great orator will do so unless he has a supernatural self-control. An ordinary man sits down, say to make a Budget: he arranges the accounts; adds up the figures; contrasts the effects of different taxes, works out steadily hour after hour their probable incidence, first of one, then of another: nothing disturbs him. With the orator it is different: during that whole process he is disturbed by the vision of his hearers; how they will feel, how they will think, how they will like his proposals, cannot but occur to him. He hears his ideas rebounding in the cheers of his hearers; he is disheartened at fancying that they will fall tamely on an inanimate and listless multitude. He is subject to two temptations: he is turned aside from the conceptions natural to the subject by an imagination of his audience; his own eager temperament naturally inclines him to the views which will excite that audience most effectually. The tranquil deposit of ordinary ideas is interrupted by the sudden eruption of volcanic forces. We know that the popular instinct suspects the judgment of great orators; we know that it does not give them credit for patient equanimity: and the popular instinct is right.

Nor is cool reflection the only higher state of mind which the oratorical impulse interferes with: we believe that it is singularly unfavorable also to the exercise of the higher kind of imagination. Several great poets have written good dramatic harangues; but no great practical orator has ever written a great poem. The creative imagination requires a singular calm: it is the "still unravished bride of quietness," as the poet says, the "foster-child of Silence and slow Time;"* no great work has ever been produced except after a long interval of still and musing meditation. The oratorical impulse interferes with this: it breaks the exclusive brooding of the mind upon the topic;

* Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

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it brings in a new set of ideas, the faces of the audience and the passions of listening men; it *jerks* the mind, if the expression may be allowed, just when the delicate poetry of the mind is crystallizing into symmetry,—the process is stayed and the result is marred.

Mr. Gladstone has suffered from both these bad effects of the oratorical temperament. His writings, even on imaginative subjects, even on the poetry of Homer, are singularly devoid of the highest imagination. They abound in acute remarks, they excel in industry of detail, they contain many animated and some eloquent passages: but there is no central conception running through them, there is no binding idea in them, there is nothing to fuse them together; they are elaborate aggregates of varied elements, they are not shaped and consolidated wholes. Nor, it is remarkable, has his style the delicate graces which mark the productions of the gentle and meditative mind; there is something hard in its texture, something dislocated in its connections. In his writings, where he is removed from the guiding check of the listening audience, he starts off just where you least expect it; he hurries from the main subject to make a passing and petty remark. As he has not the central idea of his work vividly before him, he overlays it with tedious, accessory, and sometimes irrelevant detail.

His intellect has suffered also. He is undeniably defective in the tenacity of first principle; probably there is nothing which he would less like to have said of him, and yet it is certainly true. We speak, of course, of intellectual consistency, not of moral probity. And he has not an *adhesive* mind; such adhesiveness as he has is rather to projects than principles. We will give—it is all we have space to give—a single remarkable instance of his peculiar mutability. He has adhered in the year 1860 to his project of reducing the amount levied in England by indirect

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taxation; he announced in 1853 that he would do so, and what was singular enough, he was able to do it when the time came: but this superficial consistency must not disguise from us the entire inconsistency in abstract principle between the Budget of 1853 and the Budget of 1860. The most important element in English finance at present is the income tax. In 1853 that tax was, Mr. Gladstone explained to us, an occasional, an exceptional, a sacred reserve. It had done much that was wonderful for our fathers in the French war; Sir R. Peel had used it with magical efficiency in our own time: but it was to be kept for first-rate objects. In 1860 the income tax has become the tax *of all work:* whatever is to be done, whatever other tax is to be relinquished, it is but a penny more or a penny less of this ever-ready and omnipotent impost. We do not blame Mr. Gladstone for changing his opinion: we believe that an income tax of moderate amount should be a permanent element in our financial system; we think that additions to it from time to time are the best ways of meeting any sudden demand for exceptional expenditure: but we cannot be unaware of the transition which he has made. His opinion as to our most remarkable tax has varied not only in detail but in essence: it was to be a rare and residuary agency; it is now a permanent and principal force. The inconsistency goes further: he used to think that he would be guilty of a "high political offense" if he altered the present mode of assessing the income tax, if he equalized the pressure on industrial and permanent incomes; but he is now ready to *consider* any plan with that object, — in other words, he is ready to do it if he can. A great change in his fundamental estimate of our greatest tax has made an evident and indisputable change in his mode of viewing proposed reforms and alterations in it.

Mr. Gladstone's inclination — his unconscious inclination — for the art of advocacy increases his tendency to suffer from the characteristic temptations of

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his oratorical temperament. It is scarcely necessary to say that professional advocacy is unfavorable to the philosophical investigation of truth: a more battered commonplace cannot be found anywhere. To catch at whatever turns up in favor of your own case, to be obviously blind to everything which tells in favor of the case of your adversary; to imply doubts as to principles which it is not expedient to deny, to suggest with delicate indirectness the conclusive arguments in favor of principles which it is not wise directly to affirm,—these and such as these are the arts of the advocate. A political orator has them almost of necessity, and Mr. Gladstone is not exempt from them; indeed, without any fault of his own, he has them, if not to an unusual extent, at least with a very unusual conspicuousness. His vehement temperament, his "intense and glowing mind,"* drive him into strong statements, into absolute and unlimited assertions; he lays down a principle of tremendous breadth to establish a detail of exceeding minuteness. He is not a "hedging" advocate; he does not understand the art which Hume and Peel, different as were their respective spheres, practiced with almost equal effect in those spheres. Mr. Gladstone dashes forth to meet his opponents; he will believe easily, he will state strongly, whatever may confute them. An incessant use of ingenious and unqualified principles is one of Mr. Gladstone's most prominent qualities: it is unfavorable to exact consistency of explicit assertion and to latent consistency of personal belief. His scholastic intellect makes matters worse: he will show that any two principles are or may be consistent; that if there is an apparent discrepancy, they may still, after the manner of Oxford, "be held together." One of the most remarkable of Father Newman's Oxford sermons† explains how science teaches that the earth goes round the sun and

* Wordsworth, "Excursion," Book i.

† Sermon xv. (on the Purification, 1843), "Theory of Development in Religious Doctrine."

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how Scripture teaches that the sun goes round the earth, and it ends by advising the discreet believer to accept *both:* both, it is suggested, may be accommodations to our limited intellect, — aspects of some higher and less discordant unity. We have often smiled at the recollection of the old Oxford training in watching Mr. Gladstone's ingenious "reconcilements." It must be pleasant to have an argumentative acuteness which is quite sure to extricate you, at least in appearance, from any intellectual scrape; but it is a dangerous weapon to use, and particularly dangerous to a very conscientious man, — he will not use it unless he believes in its results, but he will try and believe in its results in order that he may use it. We need not spend further words in proving that a kind of advocacy at once acute, refined,* and vehement, is unfavorable both to consistency of statement and to tenacious sluggishness of belief.

In this manner, the disorganizing effects of his greatest peculiarities have played a principal part in shaping Mr. Gladstone's character and course; they have helped to make him annoy the old Whigs, confound the country gentlemen, and puzzle the nation generally; they have contributed to bring on him the long array of depreciating adjectives,—"extravagant," "inconsistent," "incoherent," and "incalculable."

Mr. Gladstone's intellectual history has aggravated the unfavorable influence of his characteristic tendencies. Such a mind as his required, beyond any man's, the early inculcation of a steadying creed; it required that the youth, if not the child, should be father to the man; it required that a set of fixed and firm principles should be implanted in his mind in its first intellectual years, that those principles should be precise enough for its guidance, tangible enough to be commonly intelligible, true enough to stand the wear and tear of ordinary life. The tranquil task of

* More properly "refining." — ED.

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developing coherent principle might have calmed the vehemence of Mr. Gladstone's intellectual impulses, might have steadied the impulsive discursiveness of his nature; a settled and plain creed, which was in union with the belief of ordinary men, might have kept Mr. Gladstone in the common path of plain men, might have made him intelligible and safe: but he has had no such good fortune. He began the world with a vast religious theory; he embodied it in a book on "Church and State"; he defended it, as was said, mistily, — at any rate, he defended it in a manner which requires much careful pains to appreciate and much preliminary information to understand; he puzzled the ordinary mass of English-Churchmen, he has been half out of sympathy with them ever since. The creed which he had chosen, or which his Oxford training stamped upon him, was one not likely to be popular with common Englishmen: it had a scholastic appearance and a mystical essence which they dislike almost equally. But this was not its worst defect: it was a theory which broke down when it was tried. It was a theory with definite practical consequences, which no one in these days will accept, which no one in these days will propose. It was a theory to be shattered by the slightest touch of real life, for it had a definite teaching which was inconsistent with the facts of that life; which all persons who were engaged in it were, on some ground or other, unanimous in rejecting.

In Mr. Gladstone's case it has been shattered. He maintained that a visible church existed upon earth; that every state was bound to be directed by that church; that all members of that state should if possible be members of that church, that at any rate none of the members should be utterly out of sympathy with her; that the state ought to aid her in her characteristic work and refrain from aiding her antagonists in that work; that within her own sphere the church, though thus aided, is substantially

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independent, — that she has an absolute right to elect her own bishops, to determine her own creed, to make her own definitions of orthodoxy and heresy. This is the high Oxford creed, and in all essential points it was Mr. Gladstone's first creed: but a curious series of instructive events proved that England at least would not adopt it; that the actual Church of England is not the church of which it speaks, that the actual English state is by no means the state of which it speaks. The additional endowment of the Maynooth College which Sir Robert Peel proposed * was an express relinquishment of the principle that the Church of England had an exclusive right to assistance from the state; it proved that the Conservative party — the special repository of constitutional traditions — was ready to aid a different and antagonistic communion. The removal of the Jewish disabilities struck a still deeper blow: it proved that persons who could not be said to participate in even the rudiments of Anglican doctrine might be Prime Ministers and rulers in England. The theory of the exclusive union of a visible church with a visible state vanished into the air; the real world would not endure it. We fear it must be said that the theory of the substantial independence of the English Church has vanished too. The case of Dr. Hampden † proved conclusively that the intervention of the English Church in the election of her bishops was an ineffectual ceremony; that it could not be galvanized into effective life; that it was one of those lingering relics of the past which the steady English people are so loth to disturb: undisputed practice shows that the Prime Minister, who is clearly secular prince, is the dispenser of ecclesiastical dignities.

* The college was organized in 1795, to make up for the destruction of the Catholic educational institutions in France by the Revolution, and granted £8,928 by annual vote; in 1846 Peel carried a permanent endowment of £26,000 a year, with £30,000 for immediate building purposes. — ED.

† Made Bishop of Hereford by Lord John Russell in 1847, in face of bitter and organized opposition by many of the clergy, who charged him with "rationalism." — ED.

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And the judgment of her Majesty's Council in the Gorham case* went further yet; it touched on the finest and tenderest point of all: it decided that on the critical question, heresy or no heresy, the final appeal was not to an ecclesiastical court but to a lay court,—to a court not of saintly theologians but of tough old lawyers, to men of the world most worldly. The Oxford dream of an independent church, the Oxford dream of an exclusive church, are both in practice forgotten; their very terms are strange in our ears; they have no reference to real life. Mr. Gladstone has had to admit this: he has voted for the endowment of Maynooth; he has voted for the admission of Jews to the House of Commons; he has acquiesced in the Hampden case; he sees daily the highest patronage of the church distributed by Lord Palmerston, the very man who on any High Church theory ought not to dispense it, to the very men who on any High Church theory ought not to receive it. He wrote a pamphlet on the Gorham case, but he does not practically propose to alter the constitution of the judicial committee of the Privy Council; he has never proposed to bring in a bill for that purpose: he acquiesces in the supreme decision of the most secular court which can exist, over the most peculiarly ecclesiastical questions that can be thought of. These successive changes do credit to Mr. Gladstone's good sense; they show that he has a susceptible nature, that he will not live out of sympathy with his age: but what must be the effect of such changes upon any mind, especially on a delicate and high-toned mind? They tend and must tend to confuse the first principles of belief; to disturb the best landmarks of consistency; to leave the mind open to attacks of oratorical impulse; to foster the catching habit of advocacy; to weaken the guiding element in a disposition which was already defective in that element. The "movement of 1833," as Father Newman calls it, has wrecked many fine intellects, has broken many promising careers: it could

*See Vol. ii., page 368.

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not do either for Mr. Gladstone, for his circumstances were favorable and his mental energy was far too strong; but it has done him harm, nevertheless, — it has left upon his intellect a weakening strain and a distorting mark.

Mr. Gladstone was a likely man to be enraptured with the first creed with which he was thrown, and to push it too far: he wants the warning instincts. Some one said of him formerly, "He may be a good Christian, but he is an atrocious pagan;" and the saying is true. He has not a trace of the protective morality of the old world, of the *modus in rebus*, the *μέσον*, the shrinking from an extreme, which are the prominent characteristics of the ethics of the old world; which are still the guiding creed of the large part of the world that is, scarcely altered after two thousand years. And this much we may concede to the secular moralists: unless a man have from nature a selective tact which shuns the unlimited, unless he have a detective instinct which unconsciously but sensitively shrinks from the extravagant, he will never enjoy a placid life, he will not pass through a simple and consistent career; the placid moderation which is necessary to coherent success cannot be acquired, it must be born.

Perhaps we may seem already to have more than accounted for the prominence of Mr. Gladstone's characteristic defects; we may seem to have alleged sufficient reasons for his being changeable and impulsive, a vehement advocate and an audacious financier: but we had other causes to assign which have aggravated these faults. We shall not, indeed, after what we have said, venture to dwell on them at length, — we will bear in mind the precept, "If you wish to exhaust your readers, exhaust your subject;" but we will very slightly allude to one of them.

A writer like Mr. Gladstone, fond of deriving illustration from the old theology, might speak of public life in England as an *economy:* it is a world of its

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own, far more than most Englishmen are aware of. It presents the characters of public men in a disguised form; and by requiring the seeming adoption of much which is not real, it tends to modify and to distort much which is real. An English statesman in the present day lives by following public opinion: he may profess to guide it a little, he may hope to modify it in detail, he may help to exaggerate and to develop it, but he hardly hopes for more; many seem not willing to venture on so much. And what does this mean except that such a statesman has to follow the varying currents of a varying world; to adapt his public expressions, if not his private belief, to the tendencies of the hour; to be in no slight measure the slave — the petted and applauded slave, but still the slave — of the world which he seems to rule? Nor is this all: a minister is not simply the servant of the public, he is likewise the advocate of his colleagues. No one supposes that a Cabinet can ever agree: when did fifteen able men — fifteen able men, more or less rivals — ever agree on anything? We are aware that differences of opinion, more or less radical, exist in every Cabinet; that the decisions of every Cabinet are in nearly every case modified by concession; that a minority of the Cabinet frequently dissents from them. Yet all this latent discrepancy of opinion is never hinted at, much less is it ever avowed: a Cabinet minister comes down to the House habitually to vote and occasionally to speak in favor of measures which he much dislikes, from which he has in vain attempted to dissuade his colleagues; the life of a great minister is the life of a great advocate. No life can be imagined which is worse for a mind like Mr. Gladstone's. He was naturally changeable, susceptible; prone to unlimited statements, to vehement arguments. He has followed a career in which it is necessary to follow a changing guide, and to obey — more or less, but always to some extent — a fluctuating opinion; to argue vehemently for tenets

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which you dislike; to defend boldly a given law to-day, to propose boldly that the same law should be repealed to-morrow. Accumulated experience shows that the public life of our parliamentary statesmen is singularly unsteadying, is painfully destructive of coherent principle; and we may easily conceive how dangerous it must be to a mind like Mr. Gladstone's, — to a mind by its intrinsic nature impressible, impetuous, and unfixed.

What, then, is to be the future course of the remarkable statesman whose excellences and whose faults we have ventured to analyze at such length? No wise man would venture to predict, — a wise man does not predict much in this complicated world, least of all will he predict the exact course of a perplexing man in perplexing circumstances; but we will hazard three general remarks.

First, Mr. Gladstone is essentially a man who cannot impose his creed *on* his time, but must learn his creed *of* his time. Every parliamentary statesman must, as we have said, do so in some measure; but Mr. Gladstone must do so above all men. The vehement orator, the impulsive advocate, the ingenious but somewhat unsettled thinker, is the last man from whom we should expect an original policy, a steady succession of mature and consistent designs. Mr. Gladstone may well be the expositor of his time, the advocate of its conclusions, the admired orator in whom it will take pride; but he cannot be more. Parliamentary life rarely admits the autocratic supremacy of an original intellect; the present moment is singularly unfavorable to it; Mr. Gladstone is the last man to obtain it.

Secondly, Mr. Gladstone will fail if he follow the seductive example of Sir Robert Peel. It is customary to talk of the unfavorable circumstances in which the latter was placed: but in one respect those circumstances were favorable, — he had very unusual means of learning the ideas of his time; they were

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forced upon him by a loud and organized agitation. The repeal of the Corn Laws, the repeal of the Catholic disabilities — the two acts by which he will be remembered — were not chosen by him, but exacted from him; the world around him clamored for them. But no future statesman can hope to have such an advantage. The age in which Peel lived was an age of destruction; the measures by which he will be remembered were abolitions. We have now reached the term of the destructive period. We cannot abolish all our laws; we have few remaining with which educated men find fault. The questions which remain are questions of construction: how the lower classes are to be admitted to a share of political power without absorbing the whole power; how the natural union of church and state is to be adapted to an age of divided religious opinion, and to the necessary conditions of a parliamentary government. These and such as these are the future topics of our home policy; and on these the voice of the nation will never be very distinct, — destruction is easy, construction is very difficult. A statesman who will hereafter learn what our real public opinion is, will not have to regard loud agitators, but to disregard them; will not have to yield to a loud voice, but to listen for a still small voice;* will have to seek for the opinion which is treasured in secret rather than for that which is noised abroad. If Mr. Gladstone will accept the conditions of his age; if he will guide himself by the mature, settled, and cultured reflection of his time, and not by its loud and noisy organs; if he will look for that which is thought, rather than for that which is said, — he may leave a great name, be useful to his country, may steady and balance his own mind: but if not, not. The coherent efficiency of his career will depend on the guide which he takes, the index which he obeys, the δαίμων † which he consults.

*1 Kings xix. 12.

† The "guiding spirit" on which Socrates professed to rely. — Ed.

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There are two topics which are especially critical: Mr. Gladstone must not object to war because it is war, or to expenditure because it is expenditure. Upon these two points Mr. Gladstone has shown a tendency — not, we hope, an uncontrollable tendency, but still a tendency — to differ from the best opinion of the age. He has been unfortunately placed: his humane and Christian feelings are opposed to war; he has a financial ideal which has been distorted, if not destroyed, by a growing expenditure. But war is often necessary; finance is not an end, money is but a means. A statesman who would lead his age must learn its duties. It may be that the defense of England, the military defense, is one of our duties: if so, we must not sit down to count the cost; if so, it is not the age for arithmetic; if so, it is for our statesmen — it is especially for Mr. Gladstone, who is the most splendidly gifted amongst them — to sacrifice cherished hopes, to forego treasured schemes, to put out of their thoughts the pleasant duties of a pacific time, to face the barbarism of war, to vanquish the instinctive shrinkings of a delicate mind.

Lastly, Mr. Gladstone must beware how he again commits himself to a long period of bewildering Opposition. Office is a steadying situation: a minister has means of learning from his colleagues, from his subordinates, from unnumbered persons who are only too ready to give him information, what the truth is and what public opinion is. Opposition, on the other hand, is an exciting and a misleading situation: the bias of every one who is so placed is to oppose the ministry, yet on a hundred questions the ministry are likely to be right, — they have special information, long consultations, skilled public servants to guide them; on most points there is no misleading motive. Every minister decides to the best of his ability upon most of the questions which come before him: a bias to oppose him, therefore, is always dangerous; it is peculiarly dangerous to those in whom the contentious

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impulse is strong, whose life is in debate. If Mr. Gladstone's mind is to be kept in a useful track, it must be by the guiding influence of office, by an exemption from the misguiding influence of Opposition.

No one desires more than we do that Mr. Gladstone's future course should be enriched not only with oratorical fame but with useful power. Such gifts as his are amongst the rarest that are given to men; they are amongst the most valuable; they are singularly suited to our parliamentary life. England cannot afford to lose such a man. If in the foregoing pages we have seemed often to find fault, it has not been for the sake of finding fault: it is *necessary* that England should comprehend Mr. Gladstone,—if the country have not a true conception of a great statesman, his popularity will be capricious, his power irregular, and his usefulness insecure.

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*WILLIAM PITT.**

(1861.)

LORD STANHOPE'S Life of Mr. Pitt has both the excellences and the defects which we should expect from him, and neither of them are what we expect in a great historical writer of the present age. Even simple readers are becoming aware that historical investigation, which used to be a somber and respectable calling, is now an audacious pursuit. Paradoxes are very bold and very numerous: many of the recognized "good people" in history have become bad, and all the very bad people have become rather good; we have palliations of Tiberius, eulogies on Henry VIII., devotional exercises to Cromwell, and fulsome adulation of Julius Cæsar and of the first Napoleon. The philosophy of history is more alarming still: one school sees in it but a gradual development of atheistic belief; another threatens to resolve it all into "the three simple agencies, starch, fibrin, and albumen." But in these exploits of audacious ingenuity and specious learning Lord Stanhope has taken no part; he is not anxious to be original. He travels if possible in the worn track of previous historians; he tells a plain tale in an easy plain way; he shrinks from wonderful novelties; with the cautious skepticism of true common-sense, he is always glad to find that the conclusions at which he arrives coincide with those of former inquirers. His style is characteristic of his matter: he narrates with a gentle sense and

* Life of the Right Honorable William Pitt. By Earl Stanhope, author of the "History of England from the Peace of Utrecht."

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languid accuracy, very different from the stimulating rhetoric and exciting brilliancy of his more renowned contemporaries.

In the present case, Lord Stanhope has been very fortunate both in his subject and in his materials. Mr. Pitt has never had even a decent biographer, though the peculiarities of his career are singularly inviting to literary ambition: his life had much of the solid usefulness of modern times, and not a little also of the romance of old times; he was skilled in economical reform, but retained some of the majesty of old-world eloquence; he was as keen in small figures as a rising politician now, yet he was a despotic premier at an age when in these times a politician could barely aspire to be an under-secretary. It is not wonderful that Lord Stanhope should have been attracted to a subject which is so interesting in itself, and which lies so precisely in the direction of his previous studies. From his high standing and his personal connections, he has been able to add much to our minuter knowledge. He has obtained from various quarters many valuable letters which have not been published before: there is a whole series from George III. to Mr. Pitt, and a scarcely less curious series from Mr. Pitt to his mother. We need not add that Lord Stanhope has digested his important materials with great care; that he has made of them almost as much as could be made; that he has a warm admiration and a delicate respect for the great statesman of whom he is writing. His nearest approach to an ungentle feeling is a quiet dislike to the great Whig families.

Mr. Pitt is an example of one of the modes in which the popular imagination is, even in historical times, frequently and easily misled: mankind judge of a great statesman principally by the most marked and memorable passage in his career. By chance we lately had the honor to travel with a gentleman who said that Sir Robert Peel was "the leader of the

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Whigs"; and though historical evidence will always prevent common opinion from becoming so absurd as this, it is undeniable that in the popular fancy of younger men, Sir Robert Peel is the Liberal minister who repealed the Corn Laws and carried Catholic emancipation,—the world is forgetting that he was once the favorite leader of the old Tory party, the steady opponent of Mr. Canning and the steady adherent of Lord Sidmouth and Lord Eldon. We remember his great reforms, of which we daily feel the benefit; we forget that during a complete political generation he was the most plausible supporter of ancient prejudices and the most decent advocate of inveterate abuses. Mr. Pitt's fate has been very similar, but far less fortunate. The event in his life most deeply implanted in the popular memory is his resistance to the French revolution; it is this which has made him the object of affection to extreme Tories and of suspicion and distrust to reasonable Liberals: yet no rash inference was ever more unfounded and more false. It can be proved that in all the other parts of Mr. Pitt's life, the natural tendency of his favorite plan was uniformly Liberal; that at the time of the French revolution itself he only did what the immense majority of the English people, even of the cultivated English people, deliberately desired; that he did it anxiously, with many misgivings, and in opposition to his natural inclinations; that it is very dubious whether, in the temper of the French nation and the temper of the English nation, a war between them could by possibility have been avoided at that juncture; that in his administration, and under his auspices, the spirit of legislative improvement which characterizes modern times may almost be said to begin; that he was the first English minister who discussed political questions with the cultivated thoughtfulness and considerate discretion which seem to characterize us now; that in political instruction he was immeasurably superior to Fox, and that in the

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practical application of just principles to ordinary events he was equally superior to Burke.

There are two kinds of statesmen to whom, at different times, representative government gives an opportunity and a career, — dictators and administrators. There are certain men who are called in conjunctures of great danger to save the state. When national peril was imminent, all nations have felt it needful to select the best man who could be found, — for better, for worse; to put unlimited trust in him; to allow him to do whatever he wished and to leave undone whatever he did not approve of. The qualities which are necessary for a dictator are two, — a commanding character and an original intellect; all other qualities are secondary. Regular industry, a conciliatory disposition, a power of logical exposition and argumentative discussion, which are necessary to a parliamentary statesman in ordinary times, are not essential to the selected dictator of a particular juncture. If he have force of character to overawe men into trusting him, and originality of intellect sufficient to enable him to cope with the pressing, terrible, and critical events with which he is selected to cope, it is enough; every subordinate shortcoming, every incidental defect will be pardoned. "Save us!" is the cry of the moment; and in the confident hope of safety, any deficiency will be overlooked and any frailty pardoned.

The genius requisite for a great administrator is not so imposing, but it is perhaps equally rare, and needs a more peculiar combination of qualities. Ordinary administrators are very common, — every-day life requires and produces every-day persons: but a really great administrator thinks not only of the day but of the morrow; does not only what he must, but what he wants; is eager to extirpate every abuse, and on the watch for every improvement; is on a level with the highest political thought of his time, and persuades his age to be ruled according to it, to

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permit him to embody it in policy and in laws. Administration in this large sense includes legislation, for it is concerned with the far-seeing regulation of future conduct as well as with the limited management of the present. Great dictators are doubtless rare in political history; but they are not more so than great administrators, such as we have just defined them. It is not easy to manage any age; it is not easy to be on a level with the highest thought of any age: but to manage that age according to that highest thought is among the most arduous tasks of the world. The intellectual character of a dictator is noble but simple; that of a great administrator and legislator is also complex.

The exact description of Mr. Pitt is, that he had in the most complete perfection the faculties of a great administrator, and that he added to it the commanding temperament, though not the creative intellect, of a great dictator. He was tried by long and prosperous years, which exercised to the utmost his peculiar faculties, which enabled him to effect brilliant triumphs of policy and of legislation; he was tried likewise by a terrible crisis, with which he had not the originality entirely to cope, which he did not understand as we understand it now, but in which he showed a hardihood of resolution and a consistency of action which captivated the English people and which impressed the whole world.

A very slight survey of Mr. Pitt's career is all we have room for here; indeed, it is not easy within the compass of an article to make any survey, however slight: but we hope at least to show that peculiar training, peculiar opportunity, and peculiar ability combined to make him what he was.

It may seem silly to observe that Mr. Pitt was the son of his father, and yet there is no doubt that it was a critical circumstance in the formation of his character. When he was born, as Lord Macaulay has described, his father's name was the most celebrated

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in the whole civilized world; every post brought the news of some victory or some great stroke of policy, and his imagination dwelt upon the realities before him. "I am glad I am not the eldest son," he said, — "I want to speak in the House of Commons like papa;"* and there are other sayings indicating an early ambition and an early consciousness of power. There is nothing extraordinary in this: most boys are conceited; most boys have a wonderful belief in their own power. "At sixteen," says Mr. Disraeli, "every one believes he is the most peculiar man who ever lived"; and there is certainly no difficulty in imagining Mr. Disraeli thinking so. The difficulty is, not to entertain this proud belief, but to keep it; not to have these lofty visions, but to hold them. Manhood comes, and with it come the plain facts of the world: there is no illusion in them; they have a distinct teaching. "The world," they say definitely, "does not believe in you. You fancy you have a call to a great career, but no one else even imagines that you fancy it; you do not dare to say it out loud." Before the fear of ridicule and the touch of reality, the illusions of youth pass away, and with them goes all intellectual courage. We have no longer the hardihood, we have scarcely the wish, to form our own creed, to think our own thoughts, to act upon our own belief: we try to be sensible, and we end in being ordinary; we fear to be eccentric, and we end in being commonplace. It is from this fate that the son of a commanding Prime Minister is at any rate preserved: the world thinks about him, the world alludes to him; he can speak "in the grand style" and he will not be laughed at, or not much. When we wonder at the indomitable resolution and the inflexible self-reliance which Mr. Pitt through life displayed, we may lessen our wonder by remembering that he

* Letter to his mother, Aug. 2, 1766; in Chatham Correspondence.

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never endured the bitter ignominy of youth; that his self-confidence was never disheartened by being "an unknown man"; that he early received from fortune the inestimable permission *to be himself.*

The education of Mr. Pitt was as favorable to the development of his peculiar powers as his position. The public education of England has very great merits, and is well fitted for the cultivation of the average Englishman; but one at least of the qualities which fit it for training ordinary men unfit it for training an extraordinary man. Its greatest value to the mass of those who are brought up in it is its influence in diminishing their self-confidence: they are early brought into a little but rough world, which effects on a small scale what the real world will afterwards effect still more thoroughly on a large one. It teaches boys who are no better than other boys, that they are no better than other boys; that the advantages of one are compensated by the advantages of others; that the world is a miscellaneous and motley medley, in which it is not easy to conquer and over which it is impossible to rule. But it is not desirable that a young man in Pitt's position should learn this lesson. If you are to train a man to be Prime Minister at five-and-twenty, you must not dishearten his self-confidence, though it be overweening; you must not tame his energy, though it seem presumptuous. Ordinary men should and must be taught to fear the face of the world,—they are to be guided by its laws and regulated by its manners; the one exceptional man, who is in his first youth to rule the world, must be trained not to fear it, but to despise it.

The legitimate food of a self-relying nature is early solitude, and the most stimulating solitude is solitude in the midst of society: Mr. Pitt's education was of this kind entirely. He was educated at home during his whole boyhood. He was sent to Cambridge at a most unusually early age; he lived there

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almost wholly with Mr. Pretyman, his tutor. "While Mr. Pitt was an undergraduate," writes that gentleman, "he never omitted attending chapel morning and evening, or dining in the public hall, except when prevented by indisposition. Nor did he pass a single evening out of the college walls; indeed, most of his time was spent with me. In the course of this time," Mr. Pretyman continues, "I never knew him spend an idle day, nor did he ever fail to attend me at the appointed hour."* He did not make any friends, scarcely any social acquaintances, till he had taken his degree. He passed very much of his time, his tutor tells us, in very severe study; and very much of it, as we may easily believe, in the most absorbing of early pleasures, — the monotonous excitement of ambitious anticipation. On an inferior man, this sort of youth could have had but one effect, — it must have made him a prig; but it had not that effect on Pitt, — it contributed to make him a shy, haughty, and inaccessible man. Such he emerged from Cambridge, and such he continued through life to be; but he was preserved from the characteristic degradation of well-intentioned and erudite youth by two great counteracting influences, — a strong sense of humor and a genuine interest in great subjects. His sense of fun was indeed disguised from the vulgar by a rigid mask of grave dignity; but in private it was his strongest characteristic. "Don't tell me," he is said to have remarked, "of a man's being able to talk sense, — every one can talk sense: can he talk nonsense?" † And Mr. Wilberforce, the most cheerful of human beings, who had seen the most amusing society of his generation, always declared that Pitt's wit was the best which he had ever known. ‡ And it was likely to be: humor gains much by constant suppression, and at no time of life was Pitt ever wanting in dexterous words. No man who really cares for great

*Pretyman's "Life of Pitt," quoted in the work here reviewed, Chap. i.
†A "made-up" quotation from Lady Hester Stanhope, Vol. ii., Chap. ii.
‡"Life of Wilberforce," Chap. ii.

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things, and who sees the laughable side of little things, ever becomes a "prig."

While at Cambridge likewise Pitt paid, as his tutor tells us, great attention to what are now in popular estimation the characteristic studies of the place. His attainments in mathematics were probably not much like the elaborate and exact knowledge which the higher wranglers now yearly carry away from the University; but they were considerable for his time, and they comprehended the most instructive part of the subject, the first principles. A vague hope, too, is expressed that he may read Newton's "Principia" "after some summer circuit,"*—which, as we may easily suppose, was not realized. Though the tutor's information is not very exact, we may accept his general testimony that Pitt was a good mathematician according to the academic standing of that day. There is indeed strong corroborative evidence of the fact in Mr. Pitt's financial speeches. It is not easy to draw out the evidence in writing, and it would be very tiresome to read the evidence if it were drawn out; but a skillful observer of the contrast between educated and uneducated language will find in Pitt many traces of mathematical studies. Raw argument and common-sense correctness come by nature; but only a preliminary education can give the final edge to accuracy in statement and the last nicety to polished and penetrating discussion. In later life, the facile use of financial rhetoric was as familiar to Mr. Pitt as to Mr. Gladstone.

His classical studies were pursued upon a plan suggested by his father, which was certainly well adapted for the particular case, though it would not be good for mankind in general. A sufficient experience proves that no one can be taught any language thoroughly and accurately except by composition in it; and Mr. Pitt had apparently never practiced any sort of composition in Greek or Latin, whether verse

* Pretyman, quoted as before.

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or prose. But for the purpose of disciplining a student in *his own* language, the reverse practice of translating from the classical languages is the best single expedient which has ever been made use of; and to this Mr. Pitt was trained by his father from early boyhood. He was taught to read off the classics into the best English he could find, — never inserting a word with which he was not satisfied, but waiting till he found one with which he *was* satisfied. By constant practice he became so ready that he never stopped at all: the right word always presented itself immediately. When he was asked in later life how he had acquired the mellifluous abundance of appropriate language with which he amazed and charmed the House of Commons, it was to this suggestion of his father that he at once imputed it.

To the probably unconscious influence of the same instructor we may ascribe his early interest in parliamentary conflict. We have before quoted the naïve expression of his boyish desire to be in the House of Commons. There is a still more curious story of him in very early youth. It is said he "was introduced, on the steps of the throne in the House of Lords, to Mr. Fox, who was his senior by eleven years," and already in the fullness of his fame. "Fox used afterwards to relate that as the discussion proceeded, Pitt repeatedly turned to him and said, 'But surely, Mr. Fox, that might be met thus;' or, 'Yes, but he lays himself open to this retort.' What the particular criticisms were, Fox had forgotten; but he said that he was much struck at the time by the precocity of a lad who, through the whole sitting, seemed to be thinking only how all the speeches on both sides could be answered." *

Nor were his political studies confined to the studious cultivation of oratorical language, or to a thorough acquisition of the art of argumentative fence:

* Macaulay's biography of Pitt; quoted (with a blunder which Bagehot copies) by Earl Stanhope, who calls it "a Holland House tradition."—ED.

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he attended also to the *substance* of political science. He was the first great English statesman who read, understood, and valued the "Wealth of Nations." Fox had "no great opinion of *those* reasonings";* and the doctrines of Free Trade, though present like all great political ideas to the overflowing mind of Burke, were like all his ideas at the daily mercy of his eager passions and his intense and vivid imagination. Mr. Pitt, as it would seem, while still at college, acquired and arranged them with the collected consistency which was the characteristic of his mind. So thorough a training in the superficial accomplishments, the peculiar associations, and the abstract studies of political life has not perhaps fallen to the lot of any other English statesman.

Nor was the political opportunity of Mr. Pitt at all inferior to his political training. The history of the first twenty years of the reign of George III. is a history of his struggles with the aristocratic proprietors of parliamentary boroughs. Neither the extension of the power of the Crown nor the maintenance of the political ascendency of the Whig families was very popular with the nation at large; the popular element in the Constitution was for the most part neutral in the conflict, — it reserved the greater part of its influence for objects more interesting to itself: but between the two parties — between the Crown and the great borough proprietors — the strife was eager, intense, and unremitting.

As the present writer has elsewhere explained, the situation in which a constitutional king was placed under the old system of an unreformed Parliament was more than an energetic man could endure. According to the theory of that government, the patronage of the Crown was to be used to purchase votes in

* I suppose the reference is to the remark — "He [Adam Smith] proves where no one can doubt, and enters upon a chain of reasoning to produce a most unmeaning result" (B. C. Walpole's "Recollections of Fox," page 146, N. Y. Ed. 1807). "Your Adam Smiths are nothing" ("Rogers's Recollections," Fox). — Ed.

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Parliament, and to maintain a parliamentary majority by constant bargains with borough proprietors.

But *who* is to use the patronage? The theory assumes that it is to be used by the minister of the day; according to it, the head of the party which is predominant in Parliament is to employ the patronage of the Crown for the purpose of confirming that predominance. But suppose that the Crown chooses to object to this; suppose that the king for the time being should say, "This patronage is mine; the places in question are places in my service; the pensions in question are pensions from me: I will myself have at least some share in the influence that is acquired by the conferring of those pensions and the distribution of those places"? George III. actually did say this. He was a king in one respect among a thousand,—he was willing to do the work of a Secretary of the Treasury; his letters for very many years are filled with the petty details of patronage; he directed who should have what, and stipulated who should not have anything. This interference of the king must evidently in theory, and did certainly in fact, destroy the efficiency of the alleged expedient: very much of the patronage of the Crown went not to the adherents of the Prime Minister because they were his adherents, but to the king's friends because they were his friends. Many writers have been very severe on George III. for taking the course which he did take, and have frequently repeated the well-known maxims which show that what he did was a deviation from the Constitution: very likely it was, but what is the use of a constitution which takes no account of the ordinary motives of human nature? It was inevitable that an ambitious king, who had industry enough to act as he did, would so act. Let us consider his position. He was invested with authority which was apparently great. He was surrounded by noblemen and gentlemen who passed their life in paying him homage, and in professing perhaps excessive doctrines of loyal obedience to him. When the Duke of Devonshire or the Duke of Bedford or the Duke of Newcastle approached the royal closet, they implied by words and manner that the king had immeasurably more power than they had: in fact it was expected that he should have immeasurably less; it was expected that though these noblemen daily acknowledged that he was their superior, he should constantly act as if he were their inferior. The Prime Minister was in reality appointed by them, and it was expected that the king should do what the Prime Minister told him: that he should assent to measures on which he was not consulted; that he should make peace when Mr. Grenville said peace was right, that he should make war whenever Mr. Grenville said war was right; that

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he should allow the offices of his household and the dignities of his court to be used as a means for the support of Cabinets whose members he disliked and whose policy he disapproved of. It is evident that no man who was not imbecile would be content with such a position. It is not difficult to bear to be without power, it is not very difficult to bear to have only the mockery of power: but it is unbearable to have real power and to be told that you must content yourself with the mockery of it; it is unendurable to have in your hands an effectual instrument of substantial influence and also to act day by day as a pageant without any influence whatever. Human nature has never endured this, and we may be quite sure that it never will endure it. It is a fundamental error in the "esoteric theory"* of the Tory party that it assumed the king and the Prime Minister to be always of the same mind, while they often were of different minds.†

By a series of stratagems, George III. at last obtained, in the person of Lord North, a minister who combined a sufficient amount of parliamentary support with an unlimited devotion to the royal pleasure. He was a minister of great ability, great parliamentary tact, unbounded good-humor, and no firmness; he yielded everything to the intense, eager, petty incisiveness of his sovereign. The King was the true minister for all purposes of policy and business; Lord North was only the talking minister of the present French Assemblies, who is bound to explain and to defend measures which he did not suggest and about which he was not consulted.

It is difficult to say how long Lord North's Government might not have continued, if it had not been for the military calamities of the American war. That war had been very popular at its commencement, and continued popular as long as it was likely to be successful; it became unpopular as soon as it was likely to fail. The merchants began to murmur at the stoppage of trade; the country gentlemen began to murmur at the oppressive burden of war taxes;

* "Esoteric *doctrine*," etc. See Vol. iv., page 408.

† "History of the Unreformed Parliament and its Lessons," Vol. iv. of this edition, pages 404–406.

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the nation began to reconsider its opinion as to the justice of the quarrel as soon as it appeared that our military efforts would probably be disastrous. Lord North shared in these feelings: he did not believe the war would succeed, no longer hoped it would succeed, no longer thought that there was any motive for continuing to carry it on; but for several years he did continue to carry it on. The will of George III. was a very efficient force on every one just about him; and his personal ascendency over many men intellectually far his superiors is a curious example of the immense influence of a distinct judgment and inflexible decision, with fair abilities and indefatigable industry, and placed in a close contact with great men and great affairs.

At length — in March, 1782 — the calamitous issue of the American war became too evident, and Lord North resigned. Lord Holland gives us a curious history of the mode in which he announced to the House that he was no longer Prime Minister: —

"I have heard my uncle Fitzpatrick give a very diverting account of the scene that passed in the House of Commons on the day of Lord North's resignation, which happened to be a remarkably cold day with a fall of snow. A motion of Lord Surrey's for the dismissal of ministers stood for that day, and the Whigs were anxious that it should come on before the resignation of Lord North was officially announced, that his removal from office might be more manifestly and formally the act of the House of Commons. He and Lord Surrey rose at the same instant. After much clamor, disorder, and some insignificant speeches on order, Mr. Fox, with great quickness and address, moved, as the most regular method of extricating the House from its embarrassment, 'That Lord Surrey be now heard.' But Lord North, with yet more admirable presence of mind, mixed with pleasantry, rose immediately and said, 'I rise to speak to that motion;' and as his reason for opposing it, stated his resignation and the dissolution of the ministry. The House, satisfied, became impatient; and after some ineffectual efforts of speakers on both sides to procure a hearing, an adjournment took place. Snow was falling, and the night tremendous. All the members' carriages were dismissed, and Mrs. Bennet's room at the door was crowded; but Lord North's carriage was waiting. He put

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into it one or two of his friends, whom he had invited to go home with him, and turning to the crowd, chiefly composed of his bitter enemies, in the midst of their triumph, exclaimed, in this hour of defeat and supposed mortification, with admirable good-humor and pleasantry, 'I *have* my carriage. You see, gentlemen, the advantage of being in *the secret*. Good-night.'"*

Such acquiescent *bonhomie* is admirable, no doubt; but easy good-nature is no virtue for a man of action, least of all for a practical politician in critical times. It was Lord North's "happy temper" which first made him the mean slave of George III., [and] which afterwards induced him to ally himself with the most virulent assailants of that monarch and (at a preceding period) of himself.

When Lord North resigned, it was natural that the leaders of the Opposition should come at once into predominant power; but a ministerial crisis in the early part of George III.'s reign was never permitted to proceed in what is now fixed as the constitutional etiquette, — the King always interfered with it. On this occasion, the only political party who could take office was that which, under the judicious guidance of Lord Rockingham and supported by the unequaled oratory of Fox and Burke, had consistently opposed the American war. But the leaders of this party were personally disliked by George III.: Lord Rockingham he had once before called "one of the most insignificant noblemen in my service"; Mr. Fox, from a curious combination of causes, he hated. Accordingly, though it was necessary for him to treat with Lord Rockingham and his friends, he did not treat with them directly; he employed as an intermediate agent Lord Shelburne, the father of the present Marquis of Lansdowne, — a politician whom it is not difficult to describe, but whom it is difficult really to understand. Policemen tell us that there is such a character as a "reputed thief" who has never been convicted of any particular act of thievery: Lord

* Lord John Russell's "Memorials of Fox," Vol. i., pages 295, 296. This work is a chaotic lumber-yard without index or even table of contents. — ED.

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Shelburne was precisely that character in political life, — every one always said he was dishonest, but no particular act of dishonesty has ever been brought home to him.* It is not for us now to discuss the dubious peculiarities of so singular a character; but it will be admitted that it was a most unfortunate one for conducting the delicate personal negotiations inevitable on the formation of a Cabinet, and that it specially unfitted the person believed to possess it to be a good go-between between a King who hated the Opposition and an Opposition who distrusted the King. The inevitable result followed: every member of the incoming party was displeased with the King; every one disbelieved the assertions of Lord Shelburne; every one distrusted the solidity of a ministry constructed in a manner so anomalous. A ministry, however, was constructed, of which Lord Shelburne and Lord Rockingham were both members; and both, Mr. Fox said, intended to be Prime Ministers.

Lord Rockingham must evidently have been a man of very fine and delicate judgment. He could not speak in the House of Lords, and his letters are rather awkwardly expressed; but those who compare the history of the Whig party for some years before his death with the history of that party for some years after it, and those who compare the career of Burke for the same two periods, will perceive that both over the turbulence of the great party and the turbulence of the great orator the same almost invisible discretion exercised a guiding and restraining control. After Lord Rockingham's death, both the Whig party and Mr. Burke committed great errors and fell into lamentable excesses, which were entirely unlike anything which happened while he was yet

*B. C. Walpole ("Recollections of Fox," page 72, N. Y. Ed. 1807) tells as "a fact well-known at St. James's" a story of Shelburne's brazen falsehood and effrontery; but the work is of no authority. Horace Walpole and many others say he (Shelburne) was in the habit of beslavering every one with a fulsome flattery which was false on its face. For a more favorable view, see Lord Holland's Memoirs. — ED.

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alive. If he had been permitted to exercise a composing influence, it is possible that the ministry we have described might have lasted; but unfortunately, within three months after its formation he fell ill and died. Mr. Fox, who had just been quarreling with Lord Shelburne, refused to serve under him, and sent in his resignation; and his example was followed by Burke and by most of the followers of Lord Rockingham.

Lord Shelburne, however, still intended to be Prime Minister. The King was in his favor; the Whigs had no great aristocratic leader, — the Duke of Portland, who was put forward as such, had no powers of speech and but feeble powers of thought; there was no difference of political opinion which need have separated any Whig from Shelburne: he was therefore justified in hoping that if he persevered, he might rally round him in no long time the greater portion of the Whig party, notwithstanding the secession of its present leaders. He doubtless hoped also, by taking advantage of the various influences of the Crown, to attach to himself very many of the followers of Lord North, who were the old adherents of the Crown. But these were anticipations only: for the moment he was more completely separated from the parliamentary ability of his age than any minister has since been. He came into office in opposition to Lord North and one great party; he remained in office in opposition to Fox and Burke, the leaders of the other great party. The trained leaders of the old ministry and the trained leaders of the old Opposition were both opposed to him. If he decided to remain Prime Minister, it was necessary for him to take some bold step: he did so, — he made Mr. Pitt Chancellor of the Exchequer and the leader of the House of Commons, though he was but twenty-three.

Such singular good fortune has never happened to any English statesman since parliamentary government in this country has been consolidated into its

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present form, and it is very unlikely that anything like it can ever happen again. Perhaps no man of twenty-three could get through the quantity of work that is now required to fill the two offices of Finance Minister and leader of the House of Commons. In Pitt's time the Chancellor of the Exchequer (he himself tells us)* needed no private secretary,—he had no business requiring any; the leader of the House of Commons did not even require one-tenth part of the ready available miscellaneous information which he must now have at his command, and most of which cannot be learned from any books. To fill the offices which Mr. Pitt filled at twenty-three, it would in this age be necessary that a man should have a trained faculty of transacting business rapidly, which no man of twenty-three can have; and that he should have also a varied knowledge of half a hundred subjects, which no college can teach and which no book of reference will ever contain. Mr. Pitt, however, met with no difficulty: though the finances of the country had been disordered by the American war, and though the ministry was daily assailed by the dexterous good-humor of Lord North and the vehement invectives of Fox and Burke, "the boy," as they called him, was successful in his Budget and successful in his management of the House of Commons. It soon, however, became evident that Lord Shelburne's ministry could not stand long: there were three parties in the House, and a coalition of any two was sufficient to outnumber any one. According to a calculation preserved in a letter from Gibbon,† everything depended on the decision of Mr. Fox: if he returned to the Government it would be strong, if he allied himself with Lord North it must fail; he did ally himself with Lord North, and Lord Shelburne resigned.

* Letter to his mother, Aug. 10, 1782.

† To Lord Sheffield, Oct. 14, 1782:—"A certain late Secretary of Ireland reckons the House of Commons thus: Minister [Shelburne] 140, Reynard [Fox] 90, Boreas [North] 120, the rest unknown or uncertain."

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The coalition between Fox and Lord North is not defended even by Lord John Russell, who defends almost every act in the political life of his great hero. Indeed, it was not likely that he would defend it; for to it we owe the almost unbroken subjection of the Whigs, and the almost unbroken reign of the Tories, for five-and-twenty years.

No political alliance in English history has been more unpopular than this coalition. For once the King and the people were on the same side, and that side the right side. During by far the greater part of his reign the wishes of George III. were either opposed to the wishes of his people, or the wishes of the two, though identical, were pernicious. During the first part of his reign, his attempts to increase the royal influence were generally unpopular; during the latter part, he and his people were both favorable to the American war and to the French war, with what result history shows: but at the period of which we are speaking, both the prominent prejudices of the King and the deepest feelings of the people were offended by the same event. The Coalition deeply annoyed the King: it was hateful to him that his favorite, Lord North, who had been his confidential minister for years, who was enriched with the marks of his bounty and good-will, who was the leader of many politicians always biased in favor of the Crown and always anxious to support its influence if they could, should after all ally himself with Mr. Fox, who had opposed the Crown for years; who had called its latent influence "an infernal spirit";* who was the leader of the party opposed to the American war, and therefore, in the King's view, of the party which had advocated treason and abetted the disruption of the empire; who, worse than all, was the companion and encourager of the Prince of Wales in every species of dissipation, who introduced him to haunts and countenanced him in habits which made the very heart

* Horace Walpole's "Last Journals," Feb. 22, 1782.

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of an economical and decorous monarch horrified and angry, who at that very moment was endeavoring to make "capital" (as we should now say) out of the political prospects and present influence of his profligate associate. George III. used to call the "Coalition ministry" his "son's ministry"; and he could not embody his detestation of it in terms more expressive, to those who knew their meaning. On the other hand, the people were not unnaturally offended also. The Coalition brought into very clear prominence the most characteristic weakness of our unreformed Constitution: though it professed to be, and really was, a popular Constitution, the people could not be induced to believe that they had much concern in it. The members chosen by popular election were a minority; those nominated by aristocratic and indirect influence were a majority. Accordingly, most men believed or were prone to believe that the struggles in Parliament were faction fights for place and power; that the interest of the nation had little to do with them, or nothing; that they were contests for political power and for the rich pecuniary rewards which influential office then conferred. The Coalition seemed to prove that this was so, even to demonstration. If there ever had been a *bona fide* and not a simulated struggle in Parliament, it was the struggle between Fox and Lord North. They had opposed one another for years: Fox had heaped on Lord North every term of invective, opprobrium, and contempt; Lord North had said everything which a good-natured and passive man *could* say in reply. They had taken different sides both on the obvious question which had been the dividing and critical one of the last few years, and on the latent question which was the real one underlying the greater part of the controversies of the age and giving to them most of their importance. Lord North was the great parliamentary advocate of the American war; Fox was its most celebrated and effective opponent. Lord North was the most decent

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agent and the most successful co-operator whom George III. had yet found in his incessant policy of maintaining and augmenting the power of the Crown: Fox was known to be opposed to that policy with all his mind, soul, and strength; he was known to have heaped upon that policy every bitter term of contempt, opprobrium, and execration which the English language contains; he was known to have incurred the bitter hatred of George III. by so doing. With these facts before them, what could the nation infer when they saw these two statesmen combine for the evident purpose of obtaining immediate office? They could only say what they did: they said at once that the Coalition must be dishonest if the previous opposition had been real, and that the coalescing statesmen were utterly untrustworthy if that opposition had been simulated.

The Government of the Coalition was not, however, destined to be durable. George III. was a dangerous man to drive to extremity: though without great creative ability, he had dexterous powers of political management, cultivated by long habit and experience; he had an eager obstinacy allied to the obstinacy of insanity: it was not safe to try him too far. The Coalition Government, however, tried him as far as it was possible: they framed an India Bill giving the patronage of India to commissioners, to be from time to time nominated by Parliament, to be irremovable by the Crown, the first of whom were to be nominated by themselves. The King was enraged at a scheme so injurious to his secret influence: he considered that it was a scheme for enabling Mr. Fox to buy votes in Parliament. Lord Fitzwilliam, his intimate political friend, was to be at the head of the new Board; and it was expected, perhaps intended, that the Board should be an independent instrument of parliamentary power at the service of the aristocratic Whigs, and in daily opposition to the influence of the Crown, — to that personal influence which

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George III. had all his life been hoarding and acquiring. The people were almost as much enraged at the scheme as the King himself: they thought that the politicians who had just formed a corrupt coalition to obtain office were now providing a corrupt expedient for retaining that office; "being dishonest themselves," it was said, "they are providing themselves with the means of purchasing the votes of others who are dishonest likewise." The exact value of these accusations we have not space to estimate now. Something might certainly be said in extenuation, if it were needful: but at the time, the popular feeling was powerfully excited by them; they were expressed by Pitt with marvelous force and marvelous variety, and re-echoed through the nation.

The parliamentary influence of the Coalition Government, which was supported by the greater part of the borough proprietors, both Whig and Tory, was, however, sufficient to carry their India Bill through the House of Commons by majorities which would now be considered very large; it reached the House of Lords, and would have passed that House too, if George III. had not taken one of the most curious steps in our constitutional history. He wrote on a card:—"His Majesty allowed Earl Temple to say that whoever voted for the India Bill was not only not his friend, but would be considered by him as an enemy; and if these words were not strong enough, Earl Temple might use whatever words he might deem stronger and more to the purpose."*

Such was the influence of the Crown, such was especially the personal influence which George III. had acquired by steady industry and incessant attention to the personalities of politics, that the fate of the India Bill in the Lords very soon became dubious. "The bishops wavered;" † the stanchest followers of Lord North especially, being high Tories, became

* Stanhope, Vol. i., Chap. iv.

† Fitzpatrick to his brother; "Memorials of Fox," Vol. ii., page 220.

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uncertain: and in the end the bill was rejected by a majority of ninety-five over seventy-six.

Nor did the King's active influence stop here. The Coalition ministry did not resign,—although their principal measure had been rejected in the Lords, they kept their places; they induced the House of Commons to resolve that it was a breach of the privilege of Parliament to attempt to influence votes in either House by announcing "any opinion or pretended opinion of his Majesty." The ministry was passive in its place; but George III. was never deterred by minor difficulties. He sent his commands at midnight to Mr. Fox and Lord North to deliver up the seals of office, and to send them by their under-secretaries, as he must decline to see them in person. By this parliamentary *coup d'état* he broke up an administration which, though unpopular in the country, was supported by the "great owners" of parliamentary influence and an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons.

But who was to come in? That the King could turn out the old ministry was very clear, for he had done so: but that he could form a ministry that could last in such circumstances seemed unlikely; that he could form any ministry at all was not evident. Political expectation was very eager. As soon as the House met on the day after the midnight dismissal, a new writ was moved for the borough of Appleby, "in the room of the Right Honorable William Pitt, who, since his election, has accepted the office of First Lord of the Treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer." The announcement was received with laughter; for it seemed unlikely that an ambitious boy (such was the speech of the time) should be able to carry on the government and to lead the House of Commons in the face of an adverse majority, in direct opposition to the most experienced statesmen, the most practiced debaters, and the most skillful manœuvrers of his age.

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Mr. Pitt was only twenty-five, and he had no one to rely on. Mr. Dundas was a useful subordinate and an efficient man of business, but he was not a great statesman or a great orator, and he *was* a Scotch adventurer. In the Lords, Mr. Pitt was confident of the support of Lord Temple, who had effected the defeat of the India Bill by the use of the King's name; but Lord Temple wanted to be paid. He had great borough connections, which gave him permanent claims on every Government; he had just turned out the old Government, which gave him a peculiar claim upon the favor of the new. He asked for a dukedom, and was refused: the King thought he had asked too much, and perhaps believed that it would be most dangerous at that critical moment to give the highest of honorary rewards to the principal agent in an alarming act of royal influence; at any rate, the application was declined, and Lord Temple resigned. Mr. Pitt was thus left almost alone. His Cabinet consisted but of seven persons, and he himself was the only member of the House of Commons among those seven.

Everybody expected that Parliament would be immediately dissolved: as Mr. Pitt was evidently in a minority in the House of Commons which then existed, it was confidently believed that he would at once see whether he would not have a majority in a new House of Commons; he was too wary, however, to do so. In that age, public opinion formed itself slowly and declared itself slowly. The nation, as far as it had an opinion, was in favor of the new administration; but in many parts of the country there was no opinion. Delay was in favor of the side which had the advantage in telling argument; and so strong were the objections of reasonable and moderate men to the coalition between Fox and Lord North, so entirely was their India Bill interpreted by the help of that connection and regarded in its relation to it, that every day's discussion made converts. The members

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for close boroughs, and for counties in which individual interest predominated, were, it is true, a majority in the House of Commons, and they adhered for the most part to the Coalition; but the strength so obtained was always weak at a trying crisis, — the same influences acted on the borough proprietors which acted upon others, and they never liked to be opposed to the national will when it was distinctly declared. Nor had the extreme partisans of either party ever liked the coalition of the two parties; the warmest Whigs were alienated from Fox, and the strongest Tories were alienated from Lord North.* The majority of Fox began to waver, and the minority of Pitt began to augment; every division showed a tendency in the same direction. Pitt maintained the struggle, with dauntless courage and unbounded dialectical dexterity, against all the orators in the House of Commons. The event began to be doubtful; in the unreformed Parliament no more was necessary. A large section of every party was attached to it by the hope of patronage, it had been bought by promises of that patronage: as the present writer has elsewhere explained, the strength so obtained was unstable.

It especially failed at the moment at which it was especially wanted. A majority in Parliament which is united by a sincere opinion, and is combined to carry out that opinion, is in some sense secure: as long as that opinion is unchanged it will remain; it can only be destroyed by weakening the conviction which binds it together. A majority which is obtained by the employment of patronage is very different: it is combined mainly by *an expectation*. Sir Robert Walpole, the great master in the art of dispensing patronage, defined gratitude as an anticipation of future favors: he meant that the majority which maintained his administration was collected not by recollection but by hope; they thought not so much of favors which were past as of favors which were to come. At a critical moment this bond of union was ordinarily weak.†

* "The Coalition at once alienated the most zealous Tories from North, and the most zealous Whigs from Fox." — Macaulay's biography of Pitt.

† "History of the Unreformed Parliament, and its Lessons," Vol. iv., pages 406, 407 of this edition.

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As soon as it seemed likely that Mr. Pitt would be victorious, the selfish part of the followers of the Coalition — a very large part — began to go over to Mr. Pitt; the last motion of Mr. Fox* was carried by a majority of *one.*

Mr. Pitt then saw that his time had come: he dissolved Parliament, and his triumph was complete. The popular feeling was overwhelming; it prevailed even in the strongholds of the Whig aristocracy. "Thus, in Norfolk," says Lord Stanhope, "the late member had been Mr. Coke, lord of the vast domains of Holkham; a gentleman who, according to his own opinion as stated in his address to the county, had played 'a distinguished part' in opposing the American war. But notwithstanding his alleged claims of distinction and his much more certain claims of property, Mr. Coke found it necessary to decline the contest. But of all the contests of this period, the most important in that point of view was for the county of York. That great county, not yet at election times severed into Ridings, had been under the sway of the Whig houses: Bolton Abbey, Castle Howard, and Wentworth Park had claimed the right to dictate at the hustings. It was not till 1780 that the spirit of the county rose: 'Hitherto,' so in that year spoke Sir George Savile, 'I have been elected in Lord Rockingham's dining-room; now I am returned by my constituents.' And in 1784 the spirit of the county rose higher still: in 1784 the independent freeholders of Yorkshire boldly confronted the great houses, and insisted on returning, in conjunction with the heir of Duncombe Park, a banker's son, of few years and of scarcely tried abilities, though destined to a high place in his country's annals, — Mr. Wilberforce. With the help of the country gentlemen, they raised the vast sum of £18,662 for the expense of the election; and so great was their show of numbers and of resolution that the candidates upon the other side did not

* Burke's "Remonstrance." — ED.

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venture to stand a contest. Wilberforce was also returned at the head of the poll by his former constituents at Hull. 'I can never congratulate you enough on such glorious success,' wrote the Prime Minister to his young friend."* One hundred and sixty followers of Mr. Fox lost their seats, and were called "Fox's martyrs." The majority for Pitt in the new Parliament was complete, overwhelming, and enthusiastic.

The constitutional aspect of the events of 1784 has been much discussed, and well merits discussion. It is certain that George III. did much that was, according to the good notions now fixedly established, thoroughly unconstitutional; it is certain that scarcely any one will upon any constitutional doctrines, new or old, defend the "card" displayed by Lord Temple. But if we had room to argue the subject, we think it might be shown that it would have been inexpedient to apply in the year 1784 the strict constitutional maxims on which we should act in the year 1861; that the beneficial relations and that the inevitable relations of the Parliament and the Crown were different then from what they are now; that under such an aristocratic legislature as the unreformed Parliament principally was, it was needful that the Crown should sometimes intervene when the opinion of Parliament was opposed to the opinion of the people; that in times when public opinion was formed but slowly, it was advisable that the Crown should do so,—not by an instant dissolution of the House of Commons as we should now exact, but by a deferred dissolution, which would enable the thinking part of the community to reflect, and give the whole country, far and near, time to form a real judgment.

But at present we have to deal with the events of 1784 not in their relation to the Constitution of England, but in their relation to the life of Mr. Pitt.

*Stanhope, Vol. i., Chap. vi. By a curious misplacement of quotation marks, nearly all this extract is printed both in the *Review* and the reprint as Bagehot's own.—ED.

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They were the completion of his opportunity: but a short time previously, the political isolation of Lord Shelburne had made him Chancellor of the Exchequer at a boyish age; the isolation of George III. now made him Prime Minister while still very young. The first good fortune would have been a marvel in the life of any other man, but was nothing to the marvel of the second. By a strange course of great incidents, he was in the most commanding position which an English subject has ever occupied since parliamentary government was thoroughly established in the country. The victory was so complete that the mercenaries of the enemy had deserted to his standard. The Crown was necessarily on his side, for he alone stood between George III. and the hated Coalition, which he had discarded and insulted; the people were on his side, from a hatred of the official corruption of which they considered his opponents to be the representatives and the embodiments, from a firm belief in his true integrity, from a proud admiration of his single-handed courage and audacious self-reliance. He had the power to do what he would.

Nor was this all: the opportunity was not only a great opportunity, but was an opportunity in the hands of *a young man*. Half of our greatest statesmen would have been wholly unprepared for it. When Lord Palmerston was in office in the spring of 1857 with a large majority, a shrewd observer, now no longer among us, said, "Well, it is a large majority; but what is he to do with it?" He did not know himself; by paltry errors and frivolous haughtiness he frittered it away immediately. An old man of the world has no great objects, no telling enthusiasm, no large proposals, no noble reforms; his advice is that of the old banker, "Live, sir, from day to day, and don't trouble yourself!" Years of acquiescing in proposals as to which he has not been consulted, of voting for measures which he did not frame and in the wisdom of which he often did not believe, of

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arguing for proposals from half of which he dissents, usually de-intellectualize a parliamentary statesman before he comes to half his power. From all this Pitt was exempt: he came to great power with a fresh mind. And not only so: he came into power with the cultivated thought of a new generation. Too many of us scarcely remember how young a man he was: he was born in 1759, and might have well been in the vigor of life in 1830; Lord Sidmouth, his contemporary, did not die till after 1840; he was younger than his cousin, Mr. Thomas Grenville, who long represented in London society the traditions of the past, and who died in 1846. He governed men of the generation before him; alone among English statesmen, while yet a youth he was governing middle-aged men; he had the power of applying the eager thought of five-and-twenty, of making it rule over the petty knowledge and trained acquiescence of five-and-fifty. Alone as yet and alone perhaps forever in our parliamentary history, while his own mind was still original, while his own spirit was still unbroken, he was able to impose an absolute yoke on acquiescent spirits whom the world had broken for him.

We have expended so much space on a delineation of the peculiar opportunities which Mr. Pitt enjoyed that we must be very concise in showing how he used them. Three subjects then needed the attention of a great statesman, though none of them were so pressing as to force themselves on the attention of a little statesman; these were, our economical and financial legislation, the imperfection of our parliamentary representation, and the unhappy condition of Ireland. Pitt dealt with all three.

Our economical legislation was partly in an uncared-for state, and partly in an ill-cared-for state. Our customs laws were a chaos of confusion. Innumerable acts of Parliament had been passed on temporary occasions and for temporary purposes: blunders had been discovered in them, other acts were

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passed to amend those blunders; those other acts contained other blunders, new corrective legislation was required, and here too there were errors, omissions, and imperfections. And in so far as our economical legislation was based upon a theory, that theory was a very mistaken one: it was the theory of Protection. The first duty of the English legislature, it was believed, was to develop English industry and to injure foreign industry. Our manufactures, it was thought, could be made better by acts of Parliament; the manufactures of our rivals, it was believed, could be made worse. The industry of the nation worked in a complicated network of fetters and bonds.

Mr. Pitt applied himself vigorously to this chaos: he brought in a series of resolutions consolidating our customs laws, of which the inevitable complexity may be estimated by their number, — they amounted to one hundred and thirty-three, and the number of acts of Parliament which they restrained or completed was much greater.* He attempted, and successfully, to apply the principles of Free Trade — the principles which he was the first of English statesmen to learn from Adam Smith† — to the actual commerce of the country, and to the part of our commerce which afforded the greatest temptations to a philosophic statesman and presented the greatest accumulation of irritable and stupid prejudice. France and England were near one another, but had no trade with one another; no such trade at least as two countries so different in soil, in climate, and in natural aptitude ought to have. So far from either nation much wishing to trade with the other, neither wished to depend on the other for

*The *Annual Register* discreetly says there were "several"! The essence of his plan was the reduction of import duties and the imposition of excise taxes on articles of great popular consumption. He proposed the repeal of the tax on tea June 21, and opened his Budget June 30, 1784. — Ed.

†"An author of our own times, now unfortunately no more; whose extensive knowledge of detail and depth of philosophical research will, I believe, furnish the best solution to every question connected with the history of commerce or with the systems of political economy." — Speech on the Budget, Feb. 17, 1792.

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anything; the national dignity was supposed to be compromised by buying from an ancient rival. Mr. Pitt, however, framed a treaty which, if its consequences had not been swept away with so much else, both good and evil, in the European storm of the French Revolution, would have been quoted as the true commencement of Free Trade legislation; would have been referred to as we now refer to the tentative reforms of Huskisson and to the earlier Budgets of Sir Robert Peel. So little was the subject then understood, even by those most likely to understand it, that both Fox and Burke opposed the treaty with virulence and vehemence; declaring that France was our "natural enemy," and that it was unworthy of any one who pretended to be a statesman to create a "peddling traffic" and maintain "huckstering" relations with her.*

The financial reputation of Pitt has greatly suffered from the absurd praise which was once lavished on the worst part of it. The dread of national ruin from the augmentation of the national debt was a sort of nightmare in that age; the evil was apparent, and the counteracting force was not seen. No one perceived that English industry was yearly growing with an accelerating rapidity; no one foresaw that in a few years it would be aided by a hundred wonderful inventions, by the innumerable results of applied science; no one comprehended that the national estate was augmenting far faster than the national burden. The popular mind was apprehensive, and wished to

*The treaty was signed Sept. 29, 1786, and the manufacturers of both France and England were enraged and frightened by it. The debates on it in the Commons were on Jan. 23 and Feb. 12-21, 1787. Fox harped on the words "natural enemies," "natural political enemy," etc. Burke sneered at Pitt as talking of the treaty "as the affair of two little counting-houses and not of two great countries [*Annual Register*, "empires"]. He seemed to consider it as a contention between the sign of the Fleur-de-Lis and the sign of the Red Lion, which house should obtain the best custom. Such paltry considerations were beneath his notice." (Hansard). And he compared the probable state of the nation under it to that of a handsomely kept prostitute, loaded with riches but her character gone. The words quoted by Bagehot are imaginary, but true to the *feeling*. — ED.

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see some remedy applied to what seemed to be an evident and dangerous evil. Mr. Pitt sympathized with the general apprehension, and created the well-known "Sinking Fund": he proposed to apply annually a certain fixed sum to the payment of the debt,—which was in itself excellent, but he omitted to provide real money to be so paid. The only source out of which debt can be defrayed, as every one now understands, is a surplus revenue: out of an empty exchequer no claims can ever be liquidated by possibility; an excess of income over outlay is a prerequisite of a true repayment. Mr. Pitt, however, not only did not see this, but persuaded a whole generation that it was not so; he proposed to borrow the money to pay off the debt, and fancied that he thus diminished it. He had framed a puzzle in compound interest, which deceived himself and every one who was intrusted with the national finances for very many years.

The exposure of this financial juggle—for though not intended to be so, such in fact it was—has reacted very unfavorably upon Mr. Pitt's deserved fame. It was so long said that he was a great financier *because* he invented the Sinking Fund, that it came at last to be believed that he could not be a great financier inasmuch as he had invented it; so much merit had been claimed for something bad, that no search was made for anything good. But an accurate study of these times will prove that Pitt was really one of the greatest financiers in our history: that he repaired the great disorders of the American war, that he restored a surplus revenue, that he understood the true principles of taxation, that he even knew that the best way to increase a revenue from the consumption of the masses is to lower the rate of duty and develop their consuming power.

The subject of parliamentary reform is the one with which, in Mr. Pitt's early days, the public most connected his name, and is also that with which we are now least apt to connect it. We have so long

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and so often heard him treated as the great Conservative minister, that we can hardly realize to ourselves that he was an unsparing and ardent reformer; yet such is the indisputable fact, — he proposed the abolition of the worst of the rotten boroughs fifty years before Lord Grey accomplished it. The period was a favorable one for reform: the failure of the American war had left behind it a bitter irritation and an anxious self-reproach. Why had we, with our great wealth, our great valor, our long experience, failed in what seemed a trivial enterprise? why had we been put to shame in the face of Europe? why had we been forced to humble ourselves in the face of Europe? why had we been compelled to make an ignominious peace? why had we,* one of the greatest of civilized states, failed to conquer a raw and unknown colony? The popular answer was, that our arms had been unsuccessful because our government was corrupt. The practical working of our unreformed Constitution has been tersely described as the barter of patronage for power: the parliamentary majorities of that age were kept by an incessant commerce between the proprietors of seats who sold and the Secretary of the Treasury who bought. In the present day, refined arguments are often brought forward to justify or to palliate this† system of government; but whatever may be the abstract worth of those arguments, their practical worth is not great,— they will never convince the mass of men, they will never satisfy the unsophisticated instinct of ordinary men, they will not remove their natural distrust of what they believe to be unpatriotic selfishness, they will not lessen their conscientious repugnance to that which they call "corruption." After the disasters of the American war, this feeling was very strong and very diffused. An unpopular tree was judged of by unpopular fruits: our calamities were evident and our

* I have canceled the useless word "as" from the text here. — Ed.
† Text, "the."—Ed.

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corruption was conspicuous; a most distinct association of the two was formed in the popular mind. Of this Mr. Pitt took advantage. If the strong counteracting influence of the French revolution had not changed the national opinion, he would unquestionably have amended our parliamentary representation.* Even after the French revolution he never changed his own opinion: he considered that the time was not favorable for what we now call "organic changes," and he judged wisely, for the mass of the nation was wildly and frantically Conservative; but he did not abandon his early principles, — he never became a "Pittite." †

The state of Ireland was a more pressing difficulty than our financial confusion, our economical errors, or our parliamentary corruption. It had an independent legislature, which might at any time take a dangerously different view of national interests, of the expediency of a peace or the expediency of a war, from the English Parliament. That legislature was a Protestant legislature in the midst of a Catholic people; it was the legislature of a small and hated minority in the midst of an excitable, tumultuous, oppressed people. The mass of the Irish Catholics believed that the mass of the property, which belonged in fact to the Protestants, was in strict right theirs; they believed that they were the true owners of the soil, and that the Protestants were intruders; they believed that they had a right to govern the country, and that the Protestants were usurpers; they believed that the Church which the state supported

* Sessions of 1782 and 1785. Fox and Sheridan supported the measures, Burke and North opposed them. "Burke acquitted himself with the most magnanimous indiscretion: attacked W. Pitt in a scream of passion, and swore Parliament was and always had been precisely what it ought to be, and that all people who thought of reforming it wanted to overturn the Constitution" (Sheridan to Fitzpatrick, May 20, 1782; see Lord John Russell's "Memorials of Fox," Vol. i., Book v., Part 1). — Ed.

† An allusion to John Wilkes's remark to George III.: — "He [Sergeant Glynne] was a Wilkite, *which I never was*" (Twiss's "Life of Eldon," Vol. i., Chap. xli.). — Ed.

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was a heretic church, that the Church which the state did not support was the true Church, — the only true church in Christendom. In every parish the distinction between Protestant and Catholic was periodically ruled* by the most critical of tests, the pecuniary test: the collection of the tithe in detail over the country, from the Catholic population for the Protestan Church, was the source of chronic confusion and incessant bloodshed. Mr. Pitt proposed to remedy all these evils in turn, and effectually. He proposed to remedy the most immediate and pressing cause of trouble throughout the country by changing (as has since been done) the periodical extortion of the Irish tithe from the hostile farmer into an equivalent payment by a rent charge, which could be easily collected and could give rise to no disgraceful scenes.† He proposed to put the Catholic majority and the Protestant minority upon a perfect equality so far as civil rights were concerned; he was desirous that Catholics should be eligible to all offices and be electors for all offices. He was ready likewise to destroy the prevalent religious agitation at its very root, by paying the ministers of the Church of the poor as well as the ministers of the Church of the rich.‡ He proposed at once to remedy the national danger of having two Parliaments, and to remove the incredible corruption of the old Irish Parliament, by uniting the three kingdoms in a single representative system, of which the Parliament should sit in England.§ He framed, in a word, a scheme which would have cured the internal divisions of Ireland, which would have united her effectually to the empire without impairing her real liberty.

*This curious word *may* be used here intentionally, in the sense of "defined"; but I rather think it a typographical error.— Ed.

†Letter to Archbishop of Canterbury, Dec. 16, 1791 (Stanhope, Vol. ii., Chap. xv.). Grenville to Buckingham, Feb. 2, 1801 ("Courts and Cabinets of George III.," Vol. iii., 1801).

‡Letter to Cornwallis, Nov. 17, 1798 (Stanhope, Vol. iii., Chap. xxvii.). Grenville to Buckingham, as above.

§The Union, such as it was, received the King's assent July 2, 1800. — Ed.

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Of these great reforms he was only permitted to carry a few into execution. His power, as we have described it, was great when his reign commenced, and very great it continued to be for very many years: but the time became unfavorable for all forward-looking statesmanship, — for everything which could be called innovation; the French revolution and the French war destroyed for many years our national taste for political improvement. But notwithstanding these calamities, Pitt achieved some part of all his cherished schemes save one.

No opportunity would have enabled Pitt to effect these great reforms, no peculiar situation would have suggested them to him, if he had not had certain more than ordinary tendencies and abilities, — the tendencies and abilities of a great administrator. Contrary to what might at first sight be supposed, using the word "administrator" in its most enlarged sense, — in the sense in which we used it at the commencement of this article, — the first qualification of the highest administrator is, that he should think of something which he need not think of, of something which is not the pressing difficulty of the hour. For inferior men, no rule could be so dangerous. Ambitious mediocrity is dangerous mediocrity: ordinary men find what they must do amply enough for them to do; the exacting difficulty of the hour, which will not be stayed, which must be met, absorbs their whole time and all their energies. But the ideal administrator has time, has mind — for that is the difficulty — for something more: he can do what he must, and he will do what he wishes. This is Mr. Pitt's peculiarity among the great English statesmen of the eighteenth century. As a rule, the spirit of Sir Robert Walpole ruled over all these statesmen; they respected his favorite maxim, *Quieta non movere.* To deal shrewdly and adroitly with what must be dealt with, to leave alone whatever might be left alone; to accumulate every possible resource against the inevitable

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difficulties of the present moment, and never to think or dream or treat of what was not inevitable, — these were then, as always, the justifiable aims of commonplace men. They did *their* "possible"; they did all that they could with their strength and their faculties, in their day and generation. The philosophy of the time, with its definite problems and its unaspiring tendencies, encouraged them; it made them unalive to the higher possibilities they were forgetting, to the higher duties they were half consciously, half unconsciously passing over. It was with reference to this oblivious neglect of the future, this short-sighted absorption in the present, that Dr. Arnold called this century "the misused trial time of modern Europe."* It is the distinctive characteristic of Pitt that having a great opportunity, having power such as no [other] parliamentary statesman has ever had, having in his mind a fresh stock of youthful thought such as no similar statesman has ever possessed, he applied *that* power steadily and perseveringly to embody that thought. To persons who think but slightly, this may seem only a very slight merit. The first remark of many a commonplace man would be, "If I had great power, I would carry out my own ideas:" a modern Socrates, if there were such a person, would answer, "But, my good friend, what are your ideas?" When explained to an exact and scrutinizing questioner,— still more when confronted with the awful facts, the inevitable necessities of the real world,— these "ideas" would melt away; after a little while the commonplace person, who was at first so proud of them, would cease to believe that he ever entertained them; he would say, "Men of *business* do not indulge in those speculations." The characteristic merit of Pitt is, that in the midst of harassing details, in the midst of obvious cares, in the face of most keen, most able, and most stimulated opposition, he applied his whole

*"*Abused* trial time."—Stanley's Arnold.

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power to the accomplishment of great but practicable schemes.

The marvel, or at any rate the merit, is greater: Pitt was by no means an excited visionary; he had by no means one of those minds upon which great ideas fasten as a fanaticism. There was among his contemporaries a great man who was, in the highest gifts of abstract genius, in the best acquisitions of political culture, far superior to him: but in the mind of Burke, great ideas were a supernatural burden, a superincumbent inspiration; he saw a great truth, and he saw nothing else. At all times with the intense irritability of genius, in later years with the extreme one-sidedness of insanity, he was content, in season and out of season, with the great visions which had been revealed to him, with the great lessons which he had to teach and which he could but very rarely induce any one to hear. But Pitt's mind was an absolute contrast to this: he had an extreme discretion, tested at the most trying conjunctures. In 1784, when he had no power, when there was a hostile majority in the House of Commons, when he had no sure majority in the House of Lords, when the support of the King, which he undeniably had, was an undeniable difficulty, — for he did not intend to be a second Lord North; he did not intend to be a servitor of the Palace; he would not have stooped to carry out measures which he disapproved of, he would not have been willing to enunciate measures as to which he had not been consulted, — at this very moment, with most of the constitutional powers against him, with the very greatest greatly against him, with no useful part of it truly for him, he never made a false step; he guided the most feeble administration of modern times so ably and so dexterously that in a few months it became the strongest. A mind with so delicate a tact as this is entitled to some merit for adhering to distant principles. It is those who understand the present that feel the temptation of the present; it is those

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who comprehend the hour that feel the truly arduous — though upon paper it may seem the petty — difficulty of thinking beyond the hour. It is no merit in those who cannot have the present, to attempt to act for posterity, — there is nothing else left to them, they have no other occupation open to them; but it is a great merit in those who can have what is plain, apparent, and immediate, to think of the unseen, unasking, impalpable future.

It is this singular discretion which is Mr. Pitt's peculiar merit, because he belongs to the class of statesmen who are most apt to be defective in that discretion. He was an oratorical statesman; and an oratorical statesman means, *ex vi termini*, an excitable statesman. His art consists in the power of giving successfully in a more than ordinary manner the true feelings and sentiments of ordinary men; not their superficial notions nor their coarser sentiments, — for with these any inferior man may deal, — but their most intimate nature, that which in their highest moments is most truly themselves. How is the exercise of this art to be reconciled with terrestrial discretion? Is the preacher to come down from his pedestal? is he who can deal worthily with great thoughts to be asked also to deal fittingly with small details? is it possible that the same mind which can touch the hearts of all men can also be alive to the petty interests of itself? is the microscopic power to be added to the telescopic power? is the capacity for careful management to be added to the power of creating unbounded enthusiasm? Yet this is the perpetual difficulty of parliamentary statesmen. A dry man can do the necessary business, an excitable man can give to the popular House of Parliament the necessary excitement: Mr. Pitt was able, with surpassing ability and surpassing ease, to do both, — scarcely any one else has been so.

This great parliamentary position he owed to a combination of parliamentary abilities; of which only

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one or two can be, within our necessary limits, distinctly specified, but one or two of which are very prominent.

First, his singular oratorical power. He was, Lord Macaulay tells us, "at once the only man who could open a Budget without notes, and . . . who . . . could speak that most elaborately evasive and unmeaning of human compositions, a king's speech, without premeditation." * He had the eloquence of business both in its expressive and its inexpressive forms, and he had likewise the eloquence of character; that is, he had the singular power, which not half a dozen men in a generation possess, of imparting to a large audience the exact copy of the feelings, the exact impress of the determination, with which they are themselves possessed. On a matter of figures, "Pitt said so" was enough; on a question of legislative improvement, an apathetic Parliament caught some interest from his example; in the deepest moments of national despair, an anxious nation could show some remains of their characteristic courage from his bold audacity and unwearied, inflexible, and augmenting determination.

No man could have achieved this without a sanguine temperament; and accordingly, good observers pronounced Mr. Pitt the most sanguine man they had ever known. In no stage of national despondency, in no epoch of national despair, was his capacity of hope — one of the important capacities for great men in anxious affairs — ever shaken. At the crisis of his early life, Lord Temple's resignation, which seemed the last possible addition to the coalition of difficulties under which he was laboring, is said to have deprived him of sleep; but nothing else ever did so after his power attained its maturity, and while his body retained its strength.

* Biography of Pitt; he gives the second clause as Windham's statement, but the latter merely said that Pitt *seemed* (from his style of oratory, in which the sound was often weightier than the substance) as if he could have done so, — not that he ever did. — ED.

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Over the House of Commons, too, his anxious love of detail had an influence which will not surprise those who know how sensitive that critical assembly is to every sort of genuineness, and how keenly watchful it is for every kind of falsity. The labor bestowed on his reform of the customs acts, on his Indian measures, on his financial proposals from year to year, is matter of history; no one can look with an instructed eye at these measures without instantly being conscious of it. In addition to his other great powers, Mr. Pitt added the rare one of an intense capacity for work, in an age when that capacity was rarer than it is now, and in a Parliament where the element of dandies and idlers was far more dominant than it has since become.

Nor would this enumeration of Pitt's great parliamentary qualities be complete — it would want, perhaps, the most striking and obvious characteristic — if we omitted to mention Pitt's well-managed shyness and his surpassing pride. In all descriptions of Pitt's appearance in the House of Commons, a certain aloofness fills an odd space; he is "a thing apart,"* different somehow from other members. Fox was the exact opposite, — he was "a good fellow"; he rolled into the House, fat, good-humored, and popular. Pitt was spare, dignified, and reserved; when he entered the House, he walked to the place of the Premier without looking to the right or to the left, and he sat at the same place. He was ready to discuss important business with all proper persons, upon all necessary occasions; but he was not ready to discuss business unnecessarily with any one, nor did he discuss anything but business with any save a very few intimate friends, with whom his reserve at once vanished, and his wit and humor at once expanded, and his genuine interest in all really great subjects was at once displayed. In a popular assembly this sort

* "Man's love is of man's life a thing apart." — Byron, "Don Juan," Canto i., stanza cxciv.

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of reserve, rightly manipulated, is a power. It is analogous to the manner which the accomplished author of "Eōthen" recommends in dealing with Orientals: "it strikes terror and inspires respect."* A recent book of memoirs illustrates it:—During Addington's administration, a certain rather obscure "Mr. G——" was made a Privy Councilor,† and the question was raised in Pitt's presence as to the mode in which he could have obtained that honor. Some one said, "I suppose he was always talking to the Premier, and bothering him." Mr. Pitt quietly observed, "In *my* time I would much rather have made him a Privy Councilor *than have spoken to him.*" It is easy to conceive the mental exhaustion which this well-managed reserve spared him, the number of trivial conversations which it economized, the number of imperfect ambitions which it quelled before they were uttered. An ordinary man could not of course make use of it; but Pitt at the earliest period imparted to the House of Commons the two most important convictions for a member in his position,—he convinced them that he would not be the king's creature, and that he desired no pecuniary profit for himself. As he despised royal favor and despised real money, the House of Commons thought he might well despise them.

We have left ourselves no room to speak of Mr. Pitt's policy at the time of the French revolution,—it would require an essay of considerable length to do it substantial justice; but we may observe that the crisis which that revolution presented to an English statesman was one rather for a great dictator than for a great administrator. The English people were at first, in general, pleased with the commencement of the French revolution. "Anglo-manie," it seemed, had been prevalent on the Continent; the English

* Chap. xvii., near the opening.

† This initial fits only Sir Wm. Grant; if so meant, it is a silly slur on one of the greatest of judges and parliamentary orators.—ED.

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Constitution, it was hoped, would be transplanted; the fundamental principles of the English revolution, it was at any rate hoped, would be imitated. The essay of Burke by its arguments, the progress of events by an evident experience, proved that such would not be the history. What was to come was uncertain; there was no precedent on the English file: the English people did not know what they ought to think; they were ready to submit to any one who would think for them. The only point upon which their opinion was decided was, that the French revolution was very dangerous; that it had produced awful results in France; that it was no model for imitation for sober men in a sober country. They were ready to concede anything to a statesman who allowed this, who acted on this, who embodied this in appropriate action.

Mr. Pitt saw little further than the rest of the nation: what the French revolution was he did not understand; what forces it would develop he did not foresee; what sort of opposition it would require he did not apprehend. He was indeed on one point much in advance of his contemporaries. The instinct of uncultivated persons is always towards an intemperate interference with anything of which they do not approve. A most worthy police magistrate in our own time said that he intended to "put down *suicide*": the English people, in the very same spirit of uncultured benevolence, wished to "put down the French revolution,"—they were irritated at its excesses, they were alarmed at its example, they conceived that such impiety should be punished for the past and prohibited for the future. Mr. Pitt's natural instinct, however, was certainly in an entirely opposite direction. He was by inclination and by temperament opposed to all war: he was very humane, and all war is inhuman; he was a great financier, and all war is opposed to well-regulated finance. He postponed a French war as long as he could; he consented to it with reluctance, and continued it from necessity.

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Of the great powers which the sudden excitement of democratic revolution would stimulate in a nation seemingly exhausted, Mr. Pitt knew no more than those who were around him. Burke said that as a military power, France was "blotted from the map of Europe":* and though Pitt, with characteristic discretion, did not advance any sentiment which would be so extreme, or any phrase which would adhere so fixedly to every one's memory, it is undeniable that he did not anticipate the martial power which the new France, as by magic, displayed; that he fancied she would be an effete country; that he fancied he was making war with certain scanty vestiges of the *ancien régime*, instead of contending against the renewed, excited, and intensified energies of a united people. He did not know that for temporary purposes a revolutionary government is the most powerful of all governments; for it does not care for the future, and has the entire legacy of the past. He forgot that it was possible that from a brief period of tumultuous disorder there might issue a military despotism more compact, more disciplined, and more overpowering than any which had preceded it or any which has followed it.

But as we have said, the conclusion of a prolonged article is no place for discussing the precise nature of Mr. Pitt's anti-revolutionary policy. Undoubtedly, he did not comprehend the revolution in France; as Lord Macaulay has explained with his habitual power, he overrated the danger of a revolution in this country: he entirely overestimated the power of the democratic assailants, and he entirely underestimated the force of the conservative, maintaining, restraining, and if need were reactionary, influence. He saw his enemy; he did not see his allies. But it is not given to many men to conquer such difficulties; it is not given to the greatest of administrators to apprehend

*These *words* do not appear in Burke's writings; the *substance* is in the "Remarks on the Policy of the Allies" (Vol. iii., page 449, Bohn).—ED.

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entirely new phenomena. A highly imaginative statesman, a man of great moments and great visions, a greater Lord Chatham, might have done so; but the educated sense and equable dexterity of Mr. Pitt failed. All that he could do, he did,—he burnt the memory of his own name into the Continental mind: after sixty years, the French people still half believe that it was the gold of Pitt which caused many of their misfortunes; after half a century, it is still certain that it was Pitt's indomitable spirit and Pitt's hopeful temper which was the soul of every Continental coalition and the animating life of every anti-revolutionary movement. He showed most distinctly how potent is the influence of a commanding character just when he most exhibited the characteristic limitation of even the best administrative intellect.

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*BOLINGBROKE AS A STATESMAN.**

(1863.)

"WHO now reads Bolingbroke?" was asked sixty years ago. Who knows anything about him? we may ask now. Professed students of our history or of our literature may have special knowledge; but out of the general mass of educated men, how many could give an intelligible account of his career? how many could describe even vaguely his character as a statesman? Our grandfathers and their fathers quarreled for two generations as to the peace of Utrecht; but only an odd person here and there could now give an account of its provisions. The most cultivated lady would not mind asking, "The peace of Utrecht! yes — what was that?" Whether Mr. St. John was right to make that peace, whether Queen Anne was right to create him a peer for making it, whether the Whigs were right in impeaching him for making it, the mass of men have forgotten; so is history *un*made. Even now, the dust of forgetfulness is falling over the Congress of Vienna and the peace of Paris; we are forgetting the last great pacification as we have wholly forgotten the pacification before that: in another fifty years "Vienna" will be as "Utrecht," and Wellington be no more than Marlborough.

In the mean time, however, Mr. Macknight has done well to collect, for those who wish to know them, the principal events of Bolingbroke's career.

* The Life of Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, Secretary of State in the reign of Queen Anne. By Thomas Macknight, author of the "History of the Life and Times of Edmund Burke."

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There was no tolerable outline of them before, and in some respects this is a good one. Mr. Macknight's style is clear, though often ponderous; his remarks are sensible, and he has the great merit of not being imposed on by great names and traditional reputations. The defect of the book is, that he takes too literary a view of politics and politicians; that he has not looked closely and for himself at real political life; that he therefore misses the guiding traits which show what in Queen Anne's time was so like our present politics, and what so wholly unlike. We shall venture in the course of this article to supply some general outline of the controversies that were to be then decided, and of the political forces which decided them; for unless these are distinctly imagined, a reader of the present day cannot comprehend why such a man as Bolingbroke was at one moment the most conspicuous and influential of English statesmen, and then for years an exile and a wanderer.

We must own, however, that it is not the intrinsic interest even of events once so very important as the war of the Grand Alliance and the peace of Utrecht which tempts us to write this article: it is the interest of Bolingbroke's own character. He tried a great experiment. There lurks about the fancies of many men and women an imaginary conception of an ideal statesman, resembling the character of which Alcibiades has been the recognized type for centuries. There is a sort of intellectual luxury in the idea which fascinates the human mind: we like to fancy a young man, in the first vigor of body and in the first vigor of mind, who is full of bounding enjoyment, who is fond of irregular luxury, who is the favorite of society, who excels all rivals at masculine feats, who gains the love of women by a magic attraction; but who is also a powerful statesman, who regulates great events, who settles great measures, who guides a great nation. We seem to outstep the *mœnia mundi*,* the recognized limits of human nature,

* "Walls of the world." — Lucretius, in several places.

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when we conceive a man in the pride of youth to have dominion over the pursuits of age, to rule both the light things of women and the grave things of men. Human imagination so much loves to surpass human power that we shall never be able to extirpate the conception; but we may examine the approximations to it in life. We see in Bolingbroke's case that a life of brilliant license is really compatible with a life of brilliant statesmanship; that license itself may even be thought to quicken the imagination for oratorical efforts; that an intellect similarly aroused may, at exciting conjunctures, perceive possibilities which are hidden from duller men; that the favorite of society will be able to use his companionship with men and his power over women so as much to aid his strokes of policy: but on the other hand, that these secondary aids and occasional advantages are purchased by the total sacrifice of a primary necessity; that a life of great excitement is incompatible with the calm circumspection and the sound estimate of probability essential to great affairs; that though the excited hero may perceive distant things which others overlook, he will overlook near things that others see; that though he may be stimulated to great speeches which others could not make, he will also be irritated to petty speeches which others would not; that he will attract enmities, but not confidence; that he will not observe how few and plain are the alternatives of common business, and how little even genius can enlarge them; that his prosperity will be a wild dream of unattainable possibilities, and his adversity a long regret that those possibilities have departed. At any rate, such was Bolingbroke's career. We have better evidence about him than about any similar statesman, for the events in which he was concerned were large, and he has given us a narrative of them from his own hand. A summary retrospect of his career will not be worthless, if it show what sudden brilliancy and what incurable ruin such a life as his, with such a genius as his, was calculated to insure.

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Bolingbroke's father was a type of his generation: he was a rake of the Restoration. Charles II. is the only king of England who has had both the social qualities which fitted him to be the head of society and the immoral qualities which fitted him to corrupt society: his easy talk, his good anecdotes, his happy manners, his conversancy with various life, made Whitehall the "best club" of that time; what sort of life he encouraged men to lead there, we all know. Bolingbroke's father learned of him all the evil which he could learn. It was not singular that he committed excesses of dissipation, but it was rather singular that he committed what was thought to be murder: he stabbed a man in a drunken broil, and if Burnet can be trusted, only escaped from the gallows by a great bribe. He dawdled on at the coffee-houses far into Queen Anne's time,* a monument of extinct profligacy, and a spectacle and a wonder to a graver generation.

Bolingbroke's mother was a daughter of the Earl of Warwick; but she died early and his father married again, so that we hear very little about her. If the silence of his biographers may be trusted as evidence, she exercised but little influence upon his infancy or upon his life.

The most influential preceptors of Bolingbroke's boyhood were his grandfather and grandmother, who also were not unusual characters in their generation: the former was a serious and moderate Royalist, the latter was a serious but moderate Puritan. Bolingbroke's father apparently did not much like keeping house; it must have interfered with his pleasures and marred the life of coffee-houses: the whole direction of Bolingbroke's mind was given to his grave grandfather and grandmother. In after times, when he was a prominent Tory and a professed High-Churchman, satirists used to say that he was brought up among "Dissenters"; and it is probable that his grandmother,

* Far into *George II.*'s time. He died in 1742, aged 90. — Ed.

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who was the daughter of the celebrated Oliver St. John, the great parliamentary lawyer and Chief Justice, was far from being in opinion what a high Anglican divine would term a "Churchwoman." Bolingbroke himself used to relate terrible stories of having been compelled to read the sermons of Puritan divines; but as far as our slight information goes, he did not suffer more than in any moderately "serious" family of our own time. All serious families were then thought to have a little taint of Dissent, and Bolingbroke was probably very sensitive to the partial dullness of a semi-puritanical religion.

At any rate, we have no doubt it was said (and that his elder relatives much grieved at it) that "the boy was gone wrong, like his father." When he came out into the world, he astonished his associates by his license; he had been at Eton and Oxford, but he had not learnt — what is often learned there — a decorum in profligacy. To what precise enormities his license extended is immaterial, and cannot now be known. Goldsmith had talked to an old gentleman who related that Bolingbroke and his companions, in a drunken frolic, "ran naked through the Park":* but this is hardly credible; and probably Goldsmith's informant was one of the many old people who believe that the more wonderful the stories they tell, the more wonderful they themselves become. But at any rate his outrages attracted censure. He did not, like his father, belong to his generation: the age of King William tolerated much that we tolerate no longer, but it was not like the first years of Charles II.; there was no longer a headlong recoil from Puritan strictness, and the Crown was on the side of at least apparent morality. As is usual in England, grave decorum and obvious morals had a substantial influence, and against these Bolingbroke offended.

He wrote poetry too; and the sort of poetry can only be appreciated by reading Locke's celebrated

*"Life of Bolingbroke," published in his Works.

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warning against that art and the connections which it occasions.* Bolingbroke's verses are addressed to a Clara A——, an orange-girl, who pretended to sell that fruit near the Court of Requests, but who really had other objects. She was a lady of what may be called mutable connections; and the object of Bolingbroke's verses is to induce her to give them up and adhere to him only. He says:—

"No, Clara, no,—that person and that mind
Were formed by Nature, and by Heaven designed,
For nobler ends: to these return, though late;
Return to these, and so avert thy fate.
Think, Clara, think; nor will that thought be vain:
Thy slave, thy Harry, doomed to drag his chain
Of love, ill-treated and abused, that he
From more inglorious chains might rescue thee;
Thy drooping health restored by his fond care,
Once more thy beauty its full luster wear;
Moved by his love, by his example taught,
Soon shall thy soul, once more with virtue fraught,
With kind and generous truth thy bosom warm,
And thy fair mind, like thy fair person, charm.

* "Some Thoughts concerning Education," § 174:—"If he have a poetic vein, 'tis to me the strangest thing in the world that the father should desire or suffer it to be cherished or improved. Methinks the parents should labor to have it stifled and suppressed as much as may be; and I know not what reason a father can have to wish his son a poet, who does not desire to have him bid defiance to all other callings and business: which is yet not the worst of the case; for if he proves a successful rhymer, and gets once the reputation of a wit, I desire it may be considered what company and places he is like to spend his time in,—nay, and estate too. . . . Poetry and gaming, which usually go together, are alike in this too, that they seldom bring any advantage but to those who have nothing else to live on. If therefore you would not have your son the fiddle to every jovial company, without whom the sparks could not relish their wine nor know how to pass an afternoon idly; if you would not have him waste his time and estates to divert others, and condemn the dirty acres left him by his ancestors,—I do not much think you will care he should be a poet, or that his schoolmaster should enter him in versifying." (1693. The date explains everything. Pope was the first modern poet to make a competence by his poetry, and his translation of Homer was not published till 1715; and the mass of poetasters in Locke's time were scurrilous and obscene guttersnipes,—the Restoration profligacy of thought and speech was still rampant. Collier's "Short View" was not published till 1698.—Ed.)

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To virtue thus and to thyself restored,
By all admired, by one alone adored,
Be to thy Harry ever kind and true,
And live for him who more than dies for you."*

One would like to know what the orange-girl thought of all this; but it would seem he was lavish of money as well as of verses.†

At twenty-two he married. We do not know much about his money matters; and as his father and grandfather were both alive, his means could not have been at all large, especially as his expenses had been great: but his wife had certainly a considerable fortune,‡—she was descended from a clothier called "Jack of Newbury,"§ who had made a fortune several generations before, and was one of the co-heiresses of Sir Henry Winchescomb, who had large property. What sort of person she was, does not very clearly appear; but it does appear that the match was an unhappy one. He said she had a bad temper, with what truth we cannot ascertain now; and she said he was a bad husband, which was unquestionably true. He had been a rake before marriage, and did not cease afterwards; he could drink more wine than any one in London, and continued that habit too. A kind of connection was kept up between them for many years, but it was a dubious and unhappy connection. We may suppose, however, that when he was a great statesman she derived some glory, if little happiness, from him; and he certainly received a large income from her property during very many years.

At the age of twenty-eight, Bolingbroke entered the House of Commons. Before that time he had done nothing to prove himself a man of great ability: at school and college he had done well, and had laid up

* In Dodsley's Collection.

† Goldsmith says he kept "Miss Gumley, the most expensive prostitute in the kingdom."—ED.

‡ Over £40,000 (Goldsmith).—ED.

§ Of Henry VIII.'s time and of ballad fame: marched to Flodden Field with a hundred men clothed and armed at his own expense.—ED.

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perhaps a greater store of classical knowledge than those around him knew of; when abroad for a year or so, he had learned to speak French unusually well and unusually easily: but since he had been of age and in the world, his vices had been great, and he had not done much to compensate for them. Probably his boon companions considered him very clever; but then, sober men rated very low the judgment of those companions. His skill in writing poetry had not been greater than most people's, and his choice of subjects had been worse. Until now he had had no opportunity of showing great talents, and much opportunity of showing considerable vices.

In the House of Commons it was otherwise: his handsome person, long descent, and aristocratic mien set off a very remarkable eloquence, which seems to have been very ready even at the first. Years afterwards he was the model to whom Lord Chesterfield pointed in all the arts of manner and expression:—

"Lord Bolingbroke," he tells us, "has both a tongue and a pen to persuade; his manner of speaking in private conversation is full as elegant as his writings; whatever subject he either speaks or writes upon, he adorns with the most splendid eloquence,—not a studied or labored eloquence, but such a flowing happiness of diction which (from care perhaps at first) is become so habitual to him that even his most familiar conversations, if taken down in writing, would bear the press without the least correction either as to method or style."* He had "the most elegant politeness and good-breeding that ever any courtier and man of the world was adorned with."†

Nor did he neglect matter in the pursuit of manner. In later life he wrote some characters of the two great orators of antiquity, which showed how acutely he had studied them; he turned aside from the commonplace topics, from their language and their

* Letter to his son, Dec. 12, 1749 (ccvii.). The first part of this extract as given by Bagehot is a gratuitous invention, and the rest is badly mangled; I have restored Chesterfield's text.—Ed.

† Letter to his son, Nov. ——, 1749 (ccii.).

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manner, to comment on their acquaintance with all the topics of their time and on the practical style in which they discuss practical questions. No one can read those delineations without perceiving that the writer is speaking of an art which he has himself practiced. Those who knew how little studious Bolingbroke's habits were, appear to have been surprised at the information he displayed; but his excitable life rather promoted than forbade brief crises of keen study. His parts were quick, his language vague though imposing, and he could always talk very happily on subjects of which he only knew a very little.

The time was favorable to a great orator. The Tory party was exactly in the state in which it has been in our own time: it had many votes and no tongue. Our county system tends to prevent our county magnates from ruling England. Stringent limitations are laid down, which narrow the electoral choice and tend to exclude available talent. It is wise and natural that the landed interest should choose to be represented by landed gentlemen: a community of nature between it and its representatives is desirable and inevitable. But our counties are more exacting than this: each county requires that the member shall have land within the county; and as in each the number of candidates, thus limited, is but small, unsuitable ones must be chosen. We have left off expecting eloquence from a county member; grave files of speechless men have always represented the land of England. In Queen Anne's time, too, as in our own time, a lingering prejudice haunted rural minds, and inclined them to prefer stupid magnates who shared it to clever ones who were emancipated from it. Bolingbroke, like Mr. Disraeli, found the Tory party in a state of dumb power; like him, too, he became its spokesman and obtained its power.

Bolingbroke came into Parliament just at the end of King William's reign, and was at once forced into contact with the two subjects which were to occupy

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almost exclusively his active life. The reign of King William which was about to end, and that of Queen Anne which was just about to begin, were filled by two of the greatest topics which can occupy a period. The first of these was a question of dynasty. Our Revolution has been called "the minimum of a revolution,"* and in the eyes of a political philosopher so it is, — it altered but little in the substance of our institutions and in our positive law; but to common people, when it happened, the change was great. Even now the detail of our parliamentary system is not much understood by the poorer part of the public, and they care for it but little: the Queen and her family, and the Prince of Wales and the Princess Alexandra, mainly interest them; the person of the sovereign embodies to them Constitution, law, power. But our Revolution changed the sovereign; the only political name and idea known to rural hamlets were taken away, and another name and idea were substituted in their stead. Jacobites went about saying that there was one king whom God had made, and another king whom Parliament had made. At this moment, though the dogma of hereditary right has been confuted for ages, though it has been laughed at for ages, though Parliaments have condemned it, though divines have been impeached for preaching it, though it is a misdemeanor to maintain it, the tenet still lives in ordinary minds: in Somersetshire and half the quiet counties the inhabitants would say that Queen Victoria ruled by the right of birth and the grace of God, and not by virtue of an Act of Parliament; they still think that she has a divine right to the crown, and not a right by statute only. If the old creed of the Jacobites is still so powerful, what must have been its force in Queen Anne's time? That generation had seen the change from "God's king" to "man's king," and very many of them did not like it. Shrewd men said that England was prosperous

* Sir G. C. Lewis, "Dialogue on the Best Form of Government," last paragraph but one.

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under the revolutionary government; common-sense said that an ill-born king who governed well was better than a well-born king who governed ill; Whigs said that England was free after the Revolution, and would have been enslaved but for the Revolution: yet on the simple superstition of many natural minds the force of these arguments was lost,—they admitted the advantage of liberty and of prosperity, but they would not renounce "the Lord's anointed for a mess of pottage." Happily, this political feeling was counteracted by a religious feeling. the hatred to Popery supported the successful and rebellious king, who was a Protestant, against the unsuccessful and legitimate king, who was a Papist. But the strength so obtained was precarious; it might cease at any time,—the "Pretender" might change his religion, and reports were continually circulated that he had done so or was to do so: the existing dynasty could not be strong while its best support in the most natural minds was the continued profession of one religion by a person who had very strong motives to profess another.

The question of dynasty was the prominent question in Bolingbroke's age: such a question must always be the first where it exists; the question, Who shall be king? can never be secondary. But it had a formidable rival: all through King William's and all through Queen Anne's time, the English mind was occupied with almost the only question which could compete with the question who should be king of England,—the question whether there ought or ought not to be war with France. Frequent battles, daily hopes of battles, daily arguments whether there should be battles or not, kept even the greatest domestic question out of our thoughts.

On both these subjects Bolingbroke was compelled to critical action in his first Parliament. The question of dynasty was in a very odd and very English state of complexity. It might have been thought to be a question of bare alternatives, and to have been

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susceptible of no compromise: *either* Parliament had no power to choose a sovereign upon grounds of expediency, or it might choose any sovereign who was expedient. If King James might be expelled at all, it could only be because he was a bad king, and in order to put in a better king; on principle, Parliament was either powerless or omnipotent. But this clear decisive logic has never suited Englishmen. As for King William, indeed, no one could say he was any sort of king except a parliamentary king: but his heir was the Princess Anne; surely, it was thought, she and her children had *some* divine right,—a little, if not much? She had no right by birth, certainly, for her father and her brother came before her; she was not the nearest heir, but she was the nearest Protestant heir; she was not the eldest son of the last king, but she was his eldest daughter that was living. These facts do not seem to be very material to us now, but at the time they were critically material. Half the population probably believed that it would be right—not merely expedient, but right in some high mystic sense—to obey Anne and her children; they were not only ready, but were anxious, to take her for the root of a new dynasty: but the Fates seemed capriciously determined to defeat their wishes,—Anne had thirteen children, and all the thirteen died. At the death of the Duke of Gloucester, who was the last of them, some further settlement was necessary; and what it should be, was decided in Bolingbroke's first Parliament.

On this subject he ought to have been a Whig of the Whigs: his writings are full of such expressions as the "chimera of prerogative,"* "the slavish principles of passive obedience and non-resistance, which had skulked"† in old books till the reign of James I.; and he has stated the Whig conception of the Revolution as well as any one [else], if not better:—

* "Dissertation upon Parties," Letter ix., third paragraph.
† Ibid., opening words of Letter viii.

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"If," he says, "a divine, indefeasible, hereditary right to govern a community be once acknowledged, — a right independent of the community, and which vests in every successive prince immediately on the death of his predecessor, and previously to any engagement taken on his part towards the people; if the people once acknowledge themselves bound to such princes by the ties of passive obedience and non-resistance, by an allegiance unconditional and not reciprocal to protection; if a kind of oral law or mysterious cabbala, which Pharisees of the black gown and the long robe are always at hand to report and interpret as a prince desires, be once added, like a supplemental code, to the known laws of the land, — then, I say, such princes have the power, if not the right, given them of commencing tyrants; and princes who have the power are prone to think that they have the right. Such was the state of king and people before the Revolution."*

He could have no horror of Popery, for he regarded all the historical forms of Christianity with an impartial skepticism; he probably thought it more gentlemanly than Presbyterianism, and not more absurd than Anglicanism. He ought to have been ready to obey whatever king was most eligible upon grounds of rational expediency.

The proposal of the Whigs, too, was as moderate as it was possible for it to be: as public opinion required, they selected the next Protestant heir. They passed over all the children of James II., who were Catholics; the descendants of Henrietta, daughter of Charles I., who were Catholics; the elder descendants of Elizabeth, the daughter of James I., who were Catholics: and found the Princess Sophia, a younger daughter of Elizabeth, who was a very clever and accomplished lady, and who, if she had any religion, was a Protestant. All the reasonable and prudent part of the nation were in favor of this scheme: the Whigs were of course in favor of it, for it was their scheme; Harley, at the head of the moderate Tories, strenuously supported it: but it was not popular with the unthinking masses, and perhaps could not be. Half or more than half the believers in divine right

* "Dissertation upon Parties," Letter ix.

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were ready, as we have explained, to pay obedience to Queen Anne as a sort of consecrated queen: she was at any rate a princess born of a real king and queen in real England; we had always been used to her. But a search in Germany for the sort of Protestants we were likely to find there was not pleasant to the mass of Englishmen; and of the strong-minded old lady who had been discovered, nothing whatever was commonly known. After all, too, there was no certainty that in future we should be obeying the nearest Protestant heir: we were passing over several Catholic families, and if hereafter any one of them were to become a Protestant, — according to *principle*, or what was called such, we must obey him as our king.

Though the choice of the Hanoverian family as heirs to the crown was prudent, wise, and statesman-like, there was no strong popular sentiment on which it was firmly based, and no neat popular phrase by which it could in argument be precisely supported; in a word, unthinking people of the common sort did not much like the House of Hanover, and a mass of ill-defined prejudice accumulated against it. Of this prejudice Bolingbroke made himself the organ: he did not share it or try to share it, but finding a large and speechless party, he thought he could become at once politically important by saying for them that which they could not say for themselves. The scheme was successful: he became at once important in Parliament, because he was the eloquent spokesman of many inaudible persons.

In foreign policy, Bolingbroke's tactics were the same. The aggression of France was the natural terror of lovers of liberty at that time: Louis XIV. was as ready to use his power without scruple against free nations as Napoleon; and his power, though not equal to that of Napoleon at his zenith, was greater than that of Napoleon at most times, and than that of any other French sovereign at any time. The king

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of Spain, too, was about to die: it was to be feared that he would name as his heir Philip, the grandson of Louis; and few doubted but that Louis, notwithstanding an express renunciation of all such claims by treaty, would permit his grandson to accept the throne. Nor was the Spain of 1700 merely the Spain of our time: she was much more powerful. She possessed the "California" of that age, a vast empire in South America, producing gold and silver (which were then thought to be magically potent substances) for the whole civilized world; she possessed, too, Sicily and Naples and Milan and Belgium: and the popular imagination, which ever clings to decaying grandeur, still believed that Spain itself was a nation of great power, — was still able, as in former generations, to obtain ascendency in Europe. The *terror* (for such it was) of Liberal politicians then was, that this vast inheritance would practically fall into the dominion of Louis XIV.; that it would belong to a Bourbon prince brought up under his eye, and slavishly in subjection to him. The Whigs contended that this calamity should be prevented, if possible, by an amicable partition of Spain, by giving France as little as possible and that little in places as little important as possible; if no such amicable arrangement were possible, they said, it must be prevented by a war. The Tories did not like war, did not like partition treaties; they did not love France, but they were not anxious to oppose France. In that age we were uneducated in foreign policy; the mass of men had no distinct conception of Continental transactions. Nor was reason reinforced very distinctly by antipathy: we hated France, it is true, but we hated Holland also, — she was our rival in commerce, and our enemy (sometimes our successful enemy) in naval warfare; and to vanquish the French by the aid of the Dutch did not greatly gratify our animosity. The anti-revolutionary part of the nation did not care for liberty, for that was the code of the Whigs and the basis of the

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Revolution. In a word, though there was little distinct or rational opinion opposed to a war with France, there was much indistinct and crude prejudice; of this too Bolingbroke became the organ.

In the later part of his life he did not attempt to defend his first notion of foreign policy. He says:—

"I have sometimes considered, in reflecting on these passages, what I should have done if I had sat in Parliament at that time; and have been forced to own myself that I should have voted for disbanding the army then, as I voted in the following Parliament for censuring the partition treaties. I am forced to own this, because I remember how imperfect my notions were of the situation of Europe in that extraordinary crisis, and how much I saw the true interest of my own country in a half-light. But, my lord, I own it with some shame; because in truth nothing could be more absurd than the conduct we held. What! because we had not reduced the power of France by the war, nor excluded the house of Bourbon from the Spanish succession, nor compounded with her upon it by the peace; and because the house of Austria had not helped herself, nor put it into our power to help her with more advantage and better prospect of success, — were we to leave that whole succession open to the invasions of France, and to suffer even the contingency to subsist of seeing those monarchies united? What! because it was become extravagant, after the trials so lately made, to think ourselves any longer engaged by treaty, or obliged by good policy, to put the house of Austria in possession of the whole Spanish monarchy, and to defend her in this possession by force of arms, were we to leave the whole at the mercy of France? If we were not to do so, — if we were not to do one of the three things that I said above remained to be done, and if the Emperor put it out of our power to do another of them with advantage,— were we to put it still more out of our power, and to wait unarmed for the death of the king of Spain? In fine, if we had not the prospect of disputing with France, so successfully as we might have had it, the Spanish succession whenever it should be open, were we not only to show by disarming that we would not dispute it at all, but to censure likewise the second of the three things mentioned above, and which King William put in practice, — the compounding with France, to prevent if possible a war in which we were averse to engage?" *

* "Study and Use of History," Letter viii.

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The truth doubtless is, that Bolingbroke never believed or much believed these absurdities: as he was the spokesman of the Tories, he advocated and was compelled to advocate the vague notions which they not unnaturally held; and these were prejudices imbibed by habit, not opinions elaborated by effort.

That his mode of advocacy was very skillful, we may easily believe: his speeches have perished, but their merit may be conjectured. He is in his writings a great master of *specious* statement: accessory arguments and subordinate facts seem of themselves to fall precisely where they should fall. He has the knack of never *making* a case: the case always seems made for him; he seems to be giving it its most suitable expression, but to be doing no more. In the greater part of his writings which were written late in life, except when he defends the peace of Utrecht, he had no tenet to defend in which he took a keen interest; he had not the habits suitable to abstract thought, nor the genius for it: he is apt, therefore, to embody meager thoughts in excellent words, to develop long arguments from sparse facts, — he had a pleasure in writing, and he had little to say. But when his passions were eager, when his interest was vivid, when the very dissipation of his life quickened his excitability, when the topic of discussion was critically important to himself, we may well believe his advocacy to have been effective. He could ever say what he pleased, and in early life he had much to say which he well knew and for which he much cared.

A blunder of Louis's for several years simplified English politics: at the death of James II. he acknowledged his son, the "Pretender," as king of England; and he could have done him no greater harm. The English people were not very sure of abstract rights, but they were very sure of practical applications; whether they had a right to choose a king for themselves might be doubtful, but it was clear that the king of France had no such right, — whoever

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might be our king, it certainly should not be his *protégé*. War with France became popular. The king of Spain was dead: as was feared, he had left the vast inheritance of Spain to Louis's grandson, and war with France became expedient; it was declared accordingly.

The death of William simplified politics still further. Bolingbroke himself may explain this:—

"The alliances," he tells us, "were concluded, the quotas were settled, and the season for taking the field approached, when King William died. The event could not fail to occasion some consternation on one side and to give some hopes on the other: for notwithstanding the ill success with which he made war generally, he was looked upon as the sole center of union that could keep together the great confederacy then forming; and how much the French feared from his life had appeared a few years before, in the extravagant and indecent joy they expressed on a false report of his death. A short time showed how vain the fears of some and the hopes of others were. By his death the Duke of Marlborough was raised to the head of the army, and indeed of the confederacy; where he, a new, a private man, a subject, acquired by merit and by management a more deciding influence than high birth, confirmed authority, and even the crown of Great Britain, had given to King William. Not only all the parts of that vast machine, the Grand Alliance, were kept more compact and entire, but a more rapid and vigorous motion was given to the whole; and instead of languishing or disastrous campaigns, we saw every scene of the war full of action. All those wherein he appeared, and many of those wherein he was not then an actor, — but abettor, however, of their action, — were crowned with the most triumphant success. I take with pleasure this opportunity of doing justice to that great man, whose faults I knew, whose virtues I admired, and whose memory — as the greatest general and as the greatest minister that our country or perhaps any other has produced — I honor."*

The war absorbed England for several years. For the first time in our history we were the center of a great confederacy, and our general was the victorious leader, in great battles, of miscellaneous armies. It was then that we first acquired that great name as a military people, which, notwithstanding our small

* "Study and Use of History," Letter viii.

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numbers and small armies, we have since supported; and that a great foresight, a minute diligence, and a splendid courage, in modern war, were first combined in an Englishman. Marlborough was in one respect more fortunate than Wellington: Napoleon must always be the first military figure of his generation; but throughout the last century the whole Continent talked of "the wars of Marlborough," for he was the most fascinating as well as the most successful general in them.

During the first eight years of Marlborough's wars, the English nation was nearly united. A war always unites a people: the objector to it becomes a kind of traitor to his country; he seems to be a favorer of the enemy, even though he is not. Not only Harley, a moderate Tory, but Bolingbroke, an extreme Tory, took office in the war ministry. It is true, there was no dereliction of party principle in their doing so, either as such principle was then understood or as it is understood now, — Marlborough himself had never been a Whig, and Godolphin — the head of the Treasury and first minister for the home administration — had ever been a Tory; but though plain party ties might not be violated by a Tory support of Marlborough's wars, a sort of sentiment was violated, — the war was a Whig war, and could only be carried on by Whig support. Erelong, Godolphin and Marlborough were compelled to give the Whigs a large share in the actual administration; the ministry became a composite one. Though many Tories remained in it, yet its essence and its spirit were Whig; it was carrying on the sort of war which one party in the state had extolled for years, and which the antagonist party had deprecated for years. It has been called after its cause: it has been called the "Whig ministry" of Godolphin and Marlborough, the two leading Tories of the age.

The place which Bolingbroke accepted was that of Secretary at War, which brought him into contact

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with the best business of the time, — with that sort of business upon which most depended. As far as appears, he did it well; and the official experience he then acquired must have been inestimable to him afterwards. There is much which no statesman can in truth know, and much more which he will not be thought to know, unless he has gone through a certain necessary official education and learned to use certain conventional official expressions; this sort of knowledge Bolingbroke now acquired. But it was not by success or failure in office desk-work that the movements of his life were to be regulated.

The Whigs naturally did not quite like the subordinate position which they occupied in a ministry which was carrying out a Whig policy. They thought it hard that Tories should be paid for Whig measures; that the glory of delivering Europe should be given not to Whigs, who had striven to deliver her, but to Tories, who would have liked not to deliver her. Their support was necessary to Godolphin and to Marlborough, and they gradually raised the price of that support. Early in 1708 most of the remaining Tories were turned out, and Bolingbroke among them; except the two chiefs, Godolphin and Marlborough, the ministry became a Whig ministry almost exclusively.

That Bolingbroke did not like to be turned out is probable; but he professed to like it. He sought refuge in retirement; he professed to study philosophy, and passed much of his time in the country and in reading. Such professions from a man of great ambition and lax life were ridiculed; a friend suggested that he should write this motto over his favorite rural retreat: —

> "From business and the noisy world retired,
> Nor vexed by love, nor by ambition fired,
> Gently I wait the call of Charon's boat,
> Still drinking like a fish and —— like a goat."*

* Swift's "Journal to Stella," Jan. 13, 1710-11.

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And Swift says he "could hardly bear the jest,"* for he was a man rather sensitive to ridicule. And though satirists might laugh at his meditations and his studies, and though he permitted them to derange very little his pleasure or his vices, there is no doubt but that they were real and that they were valuable. Doubtless, too, though he was only twenty-eight, he was a little tired of subordinate office: his disposition was very impatient, and his sense of personal dignity very considerable. Even so patient a pattern of routine diligence as Sir Robert Peel rejoiced as a young man to be for a year or so out of office: his mind, he acknowledged, widened, and his capacity to think for himself improved. If Peel, who was made to toil in the furrow, felt this, Bolingbroke, who was made to exult in the desert, might well feel it; during three years he really read much and thought much.

But a great change was at hand. The war with France was still successful and still popular, but it might be doubted if it was still necessary: we had weakened France so much that it might be questionable if she wanted weakening more; our victories had destroyed her prestige, and the results of these victories had weakened her vigor. Sensible men began to inquire what was to be the time, what the occasion, and what the terms of peace.

The ministry indeed appeared to be firm; but it was firm in appearance only. The conditions of ministerial continuance differed in that age in a most material respect from the present conditions. Now the House of Commons, in almost all cases, prescribes imperatively not only what measures shall be taken, but what men shall take them; it chooses both policy and ministers. In Queen Anne's time, Parliament had acquired an almost complete ascendency in policy; it could fix precisely whether there should be war or no war, peace or no peace; it had acquired a perfect control upon legislation, and a nearly perfect control

* He says Bolingbroke told him so. — ED.

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upon internal administration: but it had no choice, or but little, in the selection of persons. *What* was to be done, Parliament settled; but *who* was to do it, the Queen settled.

Queen Anne had done so at her accession: though she was engaged in a Whig war, she removed the Whig ministers whom she found in office; she appointed as supreme generalissimo over the war abroad, and real Prime Minister over matters of state at home, the Duke of Marlborough, — not because of his discretion or his acquaintance with business or his military genius, but because his wife was her early friend and her special favorite. As the Duke of Wellington justly observed,* the Duke of Marlborough *was* the English government: he was not liable to be thwarted or misconstrued or neglected; his operations in Flanders were never cramped by the home government, as the operations of the Duke of Wellington in Spain were cramped. He appointed the Lord High Treasurer Godolphin; he placed the Treasury, then even more than now the supreme internal office, in Godolphin's hands, because he was connected with him by domestic ties, because they had long acted together, because he had great confidence in his financial ability. The Duke of Marlborough was not only great because of his wife, but absolute because of his wife.

By a kind of compensation, the source of his power was the cause also of his downfall. The Queen and the Duchess quarreled, as was natural: the Duchess was virulent and obtrusive, and the Queen was sensitive and sullen; the Queen had a strong sense of personal dignity, which the Duchess used to outrage; the Duchess, who was clever, thought the Queen a fool, and scarcely forbore to look and say so. From early habit, the friendship lasted much longer than could have been thought likely; but it could not last

* Letter in Stanhope Miscellanies.

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forever. As it was breaking up, a small force produced a large effect. "The Queen," Swift says, "had not a stock of amity to serve above one object at a time:"* she commonly cared but little for anybody save one; but she required one. The Duchess had placed at court a poor relative of her own,† a Miss Hill, whom both she and the Queen regarded as a petty dependant, a *real* maid, who would be useful and lie on the floor when peeresses and young ladies of quality were useless and went to bed.‡ As she was humble and artful, she acquired influence: she was "never in the way and never out of the way;"§ she was always pleasant to the Queen, and the Duchess was commonly unpleasant. The consequence was certain: the abject new favorite soon supplanted the querulous old favorite.

A very curious man took advantage of this. Wits and satirists have been fond of describing Robert Harley, but perhaps they have not described him very well: they have made a heap of incongruities of him. They have told us that being bred a Puritan, and retaining till his death much of the Puritan phraseology,‖ he yet became the favorite leader of High-Churchmen and Tories; that being a muddle-headed dawdler, he gained a great reputation for the transaction of business; that having an incapacity for intelligible speech, he became an influential orator in Parliament; that being a "puzzle-headed man,"¶ of less than average ability and less than average activity, he long ruled a great party, for years ruled the court, and was at last Prime Minister of England.

It is very natural that brilliant and vehement men should depreciate Harley; for he had nothing which they possess, but had everything which they

* "Memoirs relating to the Change in the Queen's Ministry."

† Her cousin, daughter of her father's sister. — ED.

‡ Burnet's "History of his Own Time," Vol. vi., page 36 (564), note, — a curious paragraph of contradictory gossip. — ED.

§ Charles II.'s remark about Godolphin. — ED.

‖ See letter to Carstairs quoted in Macaulay's History, Chap. xx. — ED.

¶ Macaulay as above.

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commonly do not possess. He was by nature a moderate man. In that age they called such a man a "trimmer," but they called him ill: such a man does not consciously shift or purposely trim his course,—he firmly believes that he is substantially consistent. "I do not wish in this House," he would say in our age, "to be a party to any extreme course. Mr. Gladstone brings forward a great many things which I cannot understand; I assure you he does. There is more in that bill of his about tobacco than he thinks; I am confident there is. Money is a serious thing, a *very* serious thing. And I am sorry to say Mr. Disraeli commits the party very much: he avows sentiments which are injudicious; I cannot go along with him, nor can Sir John. He was not taught the Catechism; I know he was not. There is a want in him of sound and sober religion,—and Sir John agrees with me,—which would keep him from distressing the clergy, who are very important. Great orators are very well; but as I said, how is the revenue? And the point is, not to be led away, and to be moderate, and not to go to an extreme. As soon as it seems *very* clear, then I begin to doubt. I have been many years in Parliament, and *that* is my experience." We may laugh at such speeches, but there have been plenty of them in every English Parliament. A great English divine has been described as always leaving out the principle upon which his arguments rested; even if it was stated to him, he regarded it as far-fetched and extravagant. Any politician who has this temper of mind will always have many followers; and he may be nearly sure that all great measures will be passed more nearly as he wishes them to be passed than as great orators wish. Harley had this temper, and he enjoyed its results: he always had a certain influence over moderate Whigs when he was a Tory, and over moderate Tories when he was a Whig. Nine-tenths of mankind are more afraid of violence than of anything else; and inconsistent moderation is always

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popular, because of all qualities it is most opposite to violence, — most likely to preserve the present safe existence.

Harley's moderation, which was influential because it was unaffected, was assisted by two powers which brilliant people despise, because in general they do not share them. Harley excelled in the forms of business: there is distinct evidence that official persons preferred his management of the Treasury to that of Lord Godolphin who preceded him, or Sir R. Walpole who succeeded him. In real judgment and substantial knowledge of affairs, there was doubtless no comparison, — Godolphin was the best financier of his generation, and Walpole was the best not only of his own but of many which came after him; but the ultimate issue of business is not the part of it which most impresses the officials of a department, — they understand how business is conducted better than what comes of it. The statesman who gives them no trouble, who coincides with that which they recommend, who thinks of the things which they think of, is more satisfactory to his mere subordinates than a real ruler, who has plans which others do not share, and whose mind is occupied by large considerations which only a few can appreciate and only experience can test. In his own time, both with the Tory party and with moderate Whigs, Harley's reputation as a man of business was a means of influence which, on the same scene and in our own day, could hardly be surpassed.

But it was surpassed in his own day. In personal questions, as we have explained, the Parliament in Queen Anne's time was only a subordinate power; the court was the principal and the determining power. Now, the faculty of business is but secondary in all courts; the faculty of intrigue is the main source of real influence. To be able to manage men; to know with whom to be silent, to know with whom to say how much; to be able to drop casual observations;

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to have a sense of that which others mean, though they do not say; to be aware what Lady A is in secret planning, though she says the very opposite; to know that Lord B has no influence, though he seems most potent; to know that little C is a wire-puller and can get you anything, though he looks mean and though no one knows, — in a word, to understand, to feel, to be unable to help feeling the *by-play* of life, is the principal necessity for success in courts. It is the instinct of management, which is not to be shown even in conversation, far less in writing or speculation, but yet which rules all small societies. Harley possessed it, and the obscure but potent talents of business also; and we need seek no further explanation why he was one of the most successful men in his own time.

Harley was some sort of relative* to Miss Hill (or Mrs. Masham, for she married), the rising favorite of Queen Anne's time. He was the favorite leader of all moderate Tories; and on the whole, though not without grumblings from extreme men, the most important leader of the Tory party. He had been turned out when Bolingbroke was turned out, and he wished to return. The fly was brought to the spider: Mrs. Masham, the new favorite, asked Harley what counsel she should give the Queen. He said, "Turn out the Whigs;" and meant, "Bring *me* in."

The Queen was inert, for that was her nature; and the evident popularity and the glorious success of the Whig war naturally staggered her. But the Whigs made an error. The High Church and semi-High Church party had enormous power in the nation; they had always advocated non-resistance before the Revolution, and though they had taken the oaths to King William's government, they did not like to think that they were supporting a government which was conspicuously rebellious, which began in resistance

* The Duchess of Marlborough ("Private Correspondence") says Mrs. Hill alleged herself to be aunt by blood to Harley; but this was a falsehood, for Harley's mother was a Stephens and Mrs. Hill a Jennings. — ED.

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to legitimate authority. Of course the fact was so: King William invaded England with Dutch troops, and was joined by English rebels; but the divine right of princes and the duty of unconditional obedience retained much influence over most of the clergy and over many of the laity. If the Whigs had been wise, they would have offended this powerful sentiment as little as possible. High-Churchmen were certainly powerful, but were necessarily inert; they had no distinct course to recommend; they *would* have done much, but they *could* do nothing. They had assented to the existing government; and though their assent might be unwilling and ungracious, the existing government should have let them alone. The Whigs adopted the reverse course. A foolish parson* expressed with unusual folly the sentiments of the great majority of his order: the Commons, at the instigation of the Whigs, actually impeached him at the bar of the Lords; in their folly, they used against a pious and innocuous fool the extreme remedy which the Constitution provides for the final punishment of impious and dangerous traitors. The country was in a ferment; the Tory party were active; the moderate classes were alarmed; the clergy were incensed; the Whigs became unpopular.

Harley seized the opportunity. He persuaded Mrs. Masham to persuade the Queen that now was the moment to gratify her new antipathy to her old favorite; that now she should punish the Duchess of Marlborough; that now she should dismiss the Whig ministry. She did so; he came in himself, and made Bolingbroke a Secretary of State and the first member in the House of Commons.

It has been said, and is very likely, that Harley would have preferred to retain in office the quiet and moderate Whigs, and not to bring in Bolingbroke, an extreme and unquiet Tory. The Whig party, however, was compact, and held together; it must be expelled as a whole or retained as a whole. If it had

* Henry Sacheverel.

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been wholly retained, Harley could not have come in; and he was therefore obliged to ally himself with the aggravated Tories, and with Bolingbroke who had made himself their mouthpiece. It only completes the mingled character of Bolingbroke to repeat the legend of the time, that his acceptance of office was heard with gladness, not only in grave manor-houses and by severe High-Churchmen, but in more unmentionable places and by more questionable persons. Some ladies of much beauty and little virtue, so runs the legend, were heard to say, "Bolingbroke is minister. He has six thousand guineas a year. Six thousand guineas, and all for us."* The auspices of such a ministry were not good.

The public aspect of affairs was, however, in the most critical particular very favorable. While the French war lasted, indeed, the new ministry must be perplexed: they must either retain the Duke of Marlborough as general-in-chief, — which was not pleasant, as he was the chief of the party opposed to them, and since probably Mrs. Masham did not wish it, — or they must dismiss the Duke in the midst of victory, and find a new general, who might be defeated. But this painful alternative was temporary only: the English nation had been sated with sieges and victories, and more than sated with taxes and with debt; it was disposed to peace. The new ministry came therefore into the enjoyment of a great inheritance, the greatest that has ever fallen to a new ministry. France had been so reduced by Marlborough's victories that she was ready to consent to a peace which a few years before she would have thought most shameful, which a few years before we should have thought most honorable. The new ministry were to make that peace.

The preliminary difficulty soon assumed its worst shape. It became necessary to dismiss the Duke of

* Voltaire, who tells the story twice, in different shapes: in letter to Comte de la Touraille, April 28, 1769 (Vol. lxv., page 430), and to De Bure père, Aug. 19, 1776 (Vol. lxx., page 111). St. John was not "Bolingbroke," however, till some time after this. — ED.

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Marlborough; and as might be expected, the Duke of Ormond, who succeeded him, was much less successful.* There was happily no great defeat; but there were minor disasters, which were magnified by the contrast with past glories. We had been used to a great exploit every year, and we were now asked to be thankful for not being defeated very much. The contrast was painful, and the necessity of making peace became greater than ever.

Up to this time Bolingbroke had been the most successful politician of his age, and almost of any age, in England. He had, it is true, no influence at court; Queen Anne distrusted him, — she liked decorous men of regulated life. But though little over thirty, he was the leader of the House of Commons; the first orator there; the second minister in the Cabinet; the favorite minister of the most ardent section of his party, a section just strengthened by an election. The fame of his oratory filled London, and the fame of his genius filled the country. Mr. Pitt excepted, no Englishman has risen so high and so rapidly under our parliamentary system. It was at this crisis that his eager nature and his life of excitement began to prepare his downfall, as they had prepared his rise.

The official management of the foreign negotiations was in the hands of Bolingbroke. Lord Dartmouth, the other Secretary of State, could speak no French, and Harley, the Prime Minister, could speak but little; but Bolingbroke spoke it well. Harley, too, had no directing ability; he had the defects of the late Lord Aberdeen: he was moderate and useful and judicious, but he could not upon the spur of the moment strike out a distinct policy; other statesmen must create before he could decide on their creations. Bolingbroke was to devise how a peace should be made.

A plain and strong-headed statesman — such a statesman as Walpole or as Palmerston — would have

* Ormond was expressly ordered by Bolingbroke not to undertake a battle or a siege; "success" was intentionally made impossible for him. — ED.

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had little difficulty. France was most anxious to make peace, and it mattered but little for England or for Europe what were the precise conditions of it. There are occasions when a war itself does its own work, and does it better than any pacification. The Crimean war was an instance of this: that war thoroughly destroyed the prestige of Russia and the pernicious predominance of Russia; at the end of it, what were to be the conditions of peace was almost immaterial. The wars of Marlborough had done their work also. We had gone to war to prevent the acquisition of overbearing power by Louis XIV. If a grandson who was devoted to him had succeeded to Spain and the Spanish empire while France was unexhausted, he would have been a despot in Europe; he would have been terrible to us as Napoleon was terrible: but nine years of continuous defeat had exhausted France, and Louis XIV. was now a vanquished and decayed old man. At his death the crown of France would pass to Louis XV., who was an infant: it was not much to be feared that the policy of France and the policy of Spain would be dangerously connected because their kings were second cousins. Possibly, indeed, Louis XV. might die, and the king of Spain might come to the throne of France; but this was a remote and contingent danger: it would have been unwise in our ancestors to lavish blood and spend treasure because a prince might have died young who really lived to be extremely old.* The true object of the war had been accomplished by the war itself, and the substantial task of making a peace was therefore very easy.

The accessories of the task too, it would seem, were easy also. As we had been victorious in a first-rate war, it was right that we should be dignified in the final pacification. It was right that we should be ready, that we should even be anxious to make

*Sixty-four can hardly be called "extreme" old age, though advanced enough to support the argument. — Ed.

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peace; but at any rate France, who was vanquished, ought to seem equally anxious. Since in part the war was a war to reduce her influence over the European imagination, the manner of making peace was at least as material as the terms of it. We were principal members of a great league, and we had stirred up a part of Spain to resist the French king of Spain: we were bound to keep clear faith with our allies, and bound not to desert brave provinces who had relied principally on our protection.

Bolingbroke was too eager to perceive these plain considerations. He sent a man to Paris to ask for peace; and the French minister was so astounded that he would hardly believe the man. He owned afterwards that when he was asked the preliminary question, "Do you want a peace?" it seemed to him like asking a lingering invalid whether he wanted to recover. He could hardly bring himself to believe that Bolingbroke's messenger was duly authorized.

The previous life of that messenger certainly was not such as to gain him credit. He was a French abbé named Gaultier, who had been a French spy, and perhaps still was so, in England. He was an acute, plausible person, very fat and not very respectable, and altogether as unlikely a person to be sent from a victorious nation to a defeated nation as could be imagined.

Nevertheless, the Abbé Gaultier was so sent. He said to Torcy, the French minister, "Do you want a peace? I bring you the means of treating independently of the Dutch, who are unworthy of his Majesty's kindness and the honor he has done them in addressing himself to them so many times to restore peace to Europe." In an ordinary alliance, such a clandestine reconciliation with the enemy and such a secret desertion of allies would have been plainly dishonest; there would have been little to say for it, and very few would have been willing to say that little: but the Grand Alliance was not an ordinary

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one. Its acute framers had perceived the difficulty of their task; they had foreseen the difficulty of retaining in firm cohesion a miscellaneous league of scattered states: they had adopted the best expedient at their disposal, — they had prohibited the very commencement of exclusive negotiation by individual states. Their words are as clear as words can be; they are these: — "Neutri partium fas sit, bello semel suscepto, de pace cum hoste tractare nisi conjunctim et communicatis conciliis cum altera parte." * These words expressly forbid such secret missions as those of Gaultier, and were inserted expressly to forbid them.

The separate treaty with Holland was even more express: it said that "No negotiations of peace shall be set on foot by one of the allies without the concurrence of the other; and each ally shall continually, and from time to time, impart to the others everything that passes in the said negotiations." † And yet it was especially from Holland that Bolingbroke was anxious, by every secret disguise and every diplomatic artifice, to conceal his negotiation; he hoped, by a separate and secret peace, to obtain commercial advantages for the English in which the Dutch should have no share.

Even after the first mission of Gaultier had terminated, there was an intricate series of secret negotiations, in which he and Prior were employed for us, and Mesnager for the French. Prior expressly required on our behalf "that the secret should be inviolably kept till allowed by both parties to be divulged;" ‡ and the French minister wrote to Bolingbroke: — "It wholly depends upon the secrecy and good use you will make of the entire confidence he testifies to

* "For neither of the parties shall it be lawful, the war once begun, to treat of peace with the enemy except jointly and sharing counsels with the other party." — Latin text in Dumont's "Nouveau Recueil des Traités."

† Given in the "articles of impeachment" on Bolingbroke's trial (see appendix to G. Cooke's memoir) as from a treaty of about November, 1701; but no copy of such treaty can be found in the British Museum. — Ed.

‡ Torcy's Memoirs, under this date.

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the Queen of Great Britain; and the King of France extols the firmness of the Queen, and sees with great pleasure the new marks of resolution she shows."* It was impossible to desert our allies more absolutely or more dishonorably; it was impossible to violate an express treaty more audaciously or more corruptly.

Nor was the secret negotiation a mere crime, it was also a miserable blunder;† diplomacy could hardly commit a greater. There was a splendid, a nearly unexampled power of compelling France to make a good peace: there was a great coalition against her, which had always been victorious under Eugene and Marlborough; which had obtained such successes as no Englishman had imagined; which had reduced France to a pitch of shame, degradation, and weakness that surprised her most sanguine enemies and depressed her most sanguine friends. So long as the coalition was compact, the coalition was all-powerful; but by the mere act of commencing a separate negotiation, Bolingbroke dissolved the coalition,—there could be no mutual trust after that; the principal member of the league deserted the league, and its bond was immediately disunited. We all know what would have been the consequences if England had acted thus in the great war. Suppose Lords Grey and Grenville had come in before the campaign of 1814; suppose that they had sent a secret emissary to Napoleon; suppose that they had offered a separate peace without Spain or Austria or Russia: we know that Napoleon would again have been a principal potentate in Europe, for the coalition which alone could extirpate him would have been dissolved.

The truth of these remarks is written on the very face of the treaty of Utrecht, and is obvious in every part of the negotiation of it. A few months before, Louis had been willing to abandon Spain and to abandon his grandson: he had said, "If you can

*Torcy as before.

†See Bartlett's "Familiar Quotations," under "Fouché."—Ed.

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take Spain from him, take it; I will not help him." But the allies were not content: they required that Louis should compel his grandson to resign, and this he considered dishonorable. But at Utrecht it was not even proposed that Philip should abandon Spain; that the House of Bourbon should possess Spain was a conceded and admitted principle. We had dissolved the European confederacy, and we could not hope to attain its objects.

Nor was the desertion of the other powers combined with us in the Grand Alliance our only desertion, or our worst. All these powers were states of some magnitude, and some were states of great magnitude; they would be able to go on as they had always gone on, to shift for themselves as they had always shifted: but we also deserted others who were not so independent. We had incited the Catalans in the northeast of Spain to resist the French king of Spain; we had promised them in express terms our support and aid; for a long time we had given them that aid: but at the peace of Utrecht we deserted them. The Catalans made a brave resistance; but a small province could do nothing against a great nation,—the Catalans were soon overcome and deprived of all their liberties. Throughout Europe, and doubtless throughout England also, there were many murmurs against our policy. We had encouraged a brave people to rebel; we had even threatened them if they did not rebel: and when they did rebel, we deserted them. If at present France and England were to incite the Poles to rebel against Russia, they hardly *could* desert them, the public opinion of the world is now so powerful: in Queen Anne's time public opinion could only murmur, but it did murmur,—the peace of Utrecht, men said, was a base crime as well as a gross blunder.

But why, it will be asked, did Bolingbroke commit so gross a blunder? What reasons could have rendered it plausible to him? The principal answer is

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the principal key to his character: with many splendid gifts, he was exceedingly defective in cool and plain judgment; he failed where in all ages such men as Alcibiades have failed. Whether by nature he was much gifted with judgment we cannot tell; the probability is that he was about as well gifted as other men: but his life was such as to render a cool judgment impossible. "His fine imagination," says Lord Chesterfield, "has often been heated and exhausted with his body in celebrating and deifying the prostitute of the night; and his convivial joys were pushed to all the extravagancy of frantic bacchanals."* Swift tells graphic stories of his drinking till his associates could drink no longer, and his being left at three in the morning calling for "t'other flask."† Many men may lead gross lives and keep cool heads; but such are not men of Bolingbroke's temperament. A man like Walpole, or a man like Louis Napoleon, is protected by an unsensitive nature from intellectual destruction; but such a man as Bolingbroke, whose nature is warm and whose imagination is excitable, imbibes the eager poison into the very heart of his mind. Such is our protection against the possibilities of an Alcibiades: no one who has not a vivid imagination can succeed in such a career; and any man of vivid imagination that career would burn away and destroy. Cold men may be wild in life and not wild in mind: but warm and eager men, fit to be the favorites of society and fit to be great orators, will be erratic not only in conduct but in judgment; they will see men "as trees walking."‡

*Letter to his son, Dec. 12, 1749 (ccvii.).

†There is not a word of the sort in all Swift's writings, though he refers often enough to Bolingbroke's dissipated habits. There are only two passages of a definite character in this respect, both in the "Journal to Stella," and both much short of the text above; namely:—"The Secretary [Bolingbroke] and I staid with the rest of the company till eleven: I would then have had him come away, but he was in for it; and though he swore he would come away at that flask, there I left him" (Jan. 18, 1710–11). "He . . . vowed nothing ailed him but sitting up whole nights at business, and one night drinking" (April 3, 1711). Macknight tells the story in the text; I do not know his authority. — Ed.

‡Mark viii 24.

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Bolingbroke's excitement did not prevent his working: he labored many hours and wrote many letters; he often complains of the number of hours he has been at his desk, and of the labors which were thrown upon him. But his work probably only excited him the more: for a time, *vires acquirit eundo** is the law of such wild strength. In the course of the negotiations he went to Paris, became the idol of society there, and used his social advantages efficiently for political purposes. To dazzle people more, he learned or pretended to learn the Spanish language, to read such diplomatic documents as were written in it; but such minor excellences could not mend the incurable badness of a peace commenced by a surrender of the best we had to surrender, by a dissolution of our alliance. A plain strong-headed man would have left alone the accessory advantages, and succeeded in the main point. Without Spanish and without French, Walpole would have made a good peace; Bolingbroke could not do so with both.

Bolingbroke, too, had a scheme, as imaginative and excited men will have. He knew that in relinquishing Spain to the house of Bourbon, he was giving the opponents of peace a great argumentative advantage. The mass of mankind, who judge by visible symbols, considered that a peace by which the king whom we had opposed should reign in Spain, and by which the king whom we had proposed did not reign there, was a gross failure. In sound argument, it was probably right for us to concede: as we have explained, the war had accomplished its own work; France was excessively weakened, and there was little fear of present danger from her. If by a possible death the crown of France should fall to the king of Spain, it would be time enough then to prevent the same person from reigning in the two kingdoms. The treaty of Utrecht provides that the same prince shall not reign in both; and if necessary, we could go

* "It gathers strength as it goes."

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to war to enforce the treaty. The Bourbon king was popular in Spain, and was preferred by the Spaniards to any one else; it would have been hard to dislodge him. But Bolingbroke did not like to rely on these plain arguments: he hoped to make the peace popular by an appeal to our commercial jealousy, by gaining mercantile advantages for ourselves which our rivals the Dutch did not share. He obtained for us the celebrated Assiento contract, giving us the right of carrying negro slaves to the West Indies, and also certain privileges which would have given our manufacturers great advantage in the French markets. He hoped this commercial bribe would silence the national conscience,—that it would induce us to forget our treachery to our allies, our desertion of the Catalans, and the establishment of the house of Bourbon in Spain; he hoped it would make the peace popular.

He was disappointed. The reception of that peace by the nation, and especially by the Tory party, was very like the reception of Mr. Disraeli's great Budget of 1852: a great secret had been long paraded of something which was to please everybody; it was divulged, and it pleased nobody. Bolingbroke may himself describe the effect that his work produced on the more moderate portion of his party:—

"The whimsical or the Hanover Tories continued zealous in appearance with us till the peace was signed; I saw no people so eager for the conclusion of it. Some of them were in such haste that they thought any peace preferable to the least delay, and omitted no instances to quicken their friends who were actors in it. As soon as the treaties were perfected and laid before the Parliament, the scheme of these gentlemen began to disclose itself entirely. Their love of the peace, like other passions, cooled by enjoyment. They grew nice about the construction of the articles, could come up to no direct approbation, and being let into the secret of what was to happen, would not preclude themselves from the glorious advantage of rising on the ruins of their friends and of their party."*

* Letter to Sir William Wyndham.

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Nothing could be more natural than their conduct. The moderate Tory party, and most sensible men, wished for a satisfactory peace made in a satisfactory manner; they wished for dignity in diplomacy, and desirable results: they were disappointed, — after a war which every one was proud of, we concluded a peace which nobody was proud of, in a manner that every one was ashamed of.

The commercial treaties on which Bolingbroke relied, so far from helping him, were a hindrance to him. The right of taking slaves to the West Indies was indeed popular, — the day for antislavery scruples had not commenced; but in return for the privileges which the French gave to our manufacturers, we had given many privileges to them. We had established an approximation to Free Trade, and every one was aghast: the English producer clamored for Protection, and he has seldom clamored in vain. The commercial treaties required the consent of Parliament, and were rejected. If Bolingbroke had been a Free-Trader upon principle, his convictions might have consoled him; but he professed to know nothing of commerce, and did know nothing. His books are full of nonsense on such topics: he hated the City because they were Whigs, and he hated the Dutch because he had deserted them; and these were his cardinal sentiments on mercantile affairs. He speaks of "matters, such as that of commerce, which" the negotiators of the peace of Utrecht "could not be supposed to understand:"* certainly he did not understand them. He only directed his subordinates to get out of the French as much for ourselves, and as little for the Dutch, as possible.

"Instead of gathering strength," says Bolingbroke, "either as a ministry or as a party, we grew weaker every day. The peace had been judged with reason to be the only solid foundation whereupon we could erect a Tory system; and yet when it was made, we found

* Letter to Sir William Wyndham.

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ourselves at a full stand. Nay, the very work which ought to have been the basis of our strength was in part demolished before our eyes, and we were stoned with the ruins of it." *

In our time he would have been really stoned: the fierce warlike disposition of the English people would not have endured such dishonor. We may doubt if it would have endured any peace; it certainly would not have endured the best peace, unless it were made with dignity and with honesty: we should have been wildly elated by Marlborough's victories, and little in a mood to bear shame and to be guilty of desertion. The English people has been much the same for centuries. In country manor-houses, where a son had been killed for the cause which was sacrificed; in alehouses, where men were used to hear of glorious victories; in large towns, where the wrongs of injured races like the Catalans were understood; through a whole nation which has ever been proud, brave, and honorable, — a mean peace, effected by desertion, must have been abhorred. It was merely endured because it was made, and because in those days, when communication was slow, public opinion (as in America now †) did not distinctly form itself till the crisis for action was over; but though for the moment endured, it was long abhorred. For very many years, half our political talk was colored by it; it was to the Tories what the coalition between Lord North and Fox was to the Whigs, — a principal operating cause in excluding them from office during fifty years.

And what for the time was worse, the Tory ministry of the moment was disunited. "Whilst this was doing," says Bolingbroke, "Oxford looked on as if he had not been a party to all which had passed; broke now and then a jest which savored of the inns of court and the bad company in which he had been bred; and on those occasions where his station

* Letter to Sir William Wyndham.

† To understand this not very intelligible proposition, one needs to read the *Economist* editorials on American affairs, where it is argued out. — ED.

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obliged him to speak of business, was absolutely unintelligible." * In reality, Harley disliked his position. He had always been a moderate man, respected by moderate men; he had the reputation of a man of care and judgment, and he had thriven by that reputation: on a sudden he became a party to a disreputable peace, at which even moderate Whigs were frantic, for which even moderate Tories could not vote. That the negotiations had commenced by artifice and deceit did not horrify him much, for he was a man much given to stratagem: but he knew also that the negotiation had ended in conspicuous meanness and unpopular concessions; he felt that his reputation for judgment was weakened. All shrewd observers knew that there would soon be disunion between Harley, the old head of the moderate Tories, and Bolingbroke, the present head of the extreme Tories; Swift, who was a very shrewd observer and who was close at hand, knew that [t]here was already disunion.

Before the treaties had been discussed by, and the commercial part of them rejected in, the House of Commons, Bolingbroke made another error: he left the House of Commons. Harley had been created Earl of Oxford, and he could not endure to be inferior to him. There was much delay in conferring the peerage, † and he was very angry at it; he was, Oxford says, "in the utmost rage against the Treasurer, Lady Masham, and without sparing the greatest," and made "outrageous speeches." A wise friend would have observed to him that no greater kindness could have been done him than to refuse him a peerage altogether. The great but gradual revolution

* Letter to Sir William Wyndham. This tallies closely with the Queen's complaint "that he neglected all business; that he was seldom to be understood; that when he did explain himself, she could not depend upon the truth of what he said" (Lewis to Swift, July 27, 1714).— Ed.

† The alleged reason — to allow him to carry through the business of the session in the Commons — was probably the true one. — Ed.

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which was consummated in the time of Walpole was then beginning to be apparent. Before Queen Anne's time our most conspicuous statesmen had been, during the most important part of their lives, members of the House of Lords; since Queen Anne's time they have at similar periods been usually members of the House of Commons. There are several causes for this; but the principal is one on which Bolingbroke has often commented. From time immemorial the Commons have been the guardians of the public purse, and whenever the public purse was to be touched they have always been the first body in the state; but before the Revolution they were seldom wanted. They granted the king, at the commencement of his reign, an estimated revenue* which was supposed to be adequate to the estimated expenditure in time of peace; as our wealth was rapidly increasing, it was often more than sufficient. In time of war the House of Commons must be applied to, — new money was needful for new expenses: but the ordinary expenditure went on every year without their being consulted or required. The expense of William's wars and Queen Anne's wars made a great change: taxation became larger than it had ever been, though very small as it seems to us now. Since that time the estimated revenue which the Crown yearly enjoyed, without additional parliamentary aid, has scarcely ever been adequate to the estimated expenditure; there has yearly been a Budget, and yearly a recourse to the House of Commons. The position of a minister in the House of Commons has therefore greatly risen. Nine years out of ten the nation could at present dispense with a House of Lords, — though a useful, it is an auxiliary power; but every year we want a House of Commons, for it has to grant funds of primary necessity. The minister who can manage the Commons, and extract from them the necessary moneys, has then become our most necessary minister.

* The proceeds of certain imposts, that is. — ED.

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The change was just beginning; for Walpole, Bolingbroke's schoolfellow and parliamentary rival, ruled his generation by his parliamentary and financial abilities. But Bolingbroke was too eager and impetuous to foresee the action of this powerful but obscure cause: the tradition had been that the Peers were superior to the Commons, and he adhered to this tradition; he was angry till he obtained his peerage.

Nor was he satisfied when he did obtain it: he was made a viscount only, and Harley had been made an earl; he could not bear to be inferior to him in anything, especially as there was an extinct earldom in his own family. He was vexed, angry, and dissatisfied. Once he went out of town, and would attend to no business for days. He was angry, too, with the press: the peace of Utrecht was attacked and assailed, and it was his peace. It is true that Bolingbroke should have been able to bear literary comments, even when rather bitter: he was himself through life an unscrupulous writer, using the press without reluctance and without cessation. He was then employing Swift, the most bitter writer of libels, both political and personal, that can be conceived; he lived with Swift in intimacy, and printed his libels; he gave him political information and ideas, and praised him when he used them so as most to hurt his adversaries: he ought to have been able to bear anything, yet he could bear nothing. He prosecuted many more persons than it was usual to prosecute then, and far more than have been prosecuted since. He thought, with a Continental wit, that "a press is free when government newspapers are licentious;" he thought that everything should be said for him and that nothing should be said against him. The copyists of Alcibiades are commonly irritable, for neither their nature nor their habits teach them forbearance.

But neither Bolingbroke's disunion with his principal colleague, nor the attacks of the press, were his

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greatest danger. He was in the worst political position which can be imagined. As we have explained, the principal question of the age was a question of dynasty; after the peace with France it was the sole great question: it is in the nature of a topic so absorbing to swallow up every subject of minor interest. There were only two solutions of the problem possible; the law prescribed one, and a sort of superstition prescribed another. The Act of Settlement said that the house of Hanover was to succeed Queen Anne; the doctrine of non-resistance said that the Pretender was to succeed her. The Jacobites adhered to the doctrine of non-resistance, the Whigs adhered to the Act of Parliament; both these parties had a definite solution of the principal topic of the hour: but between these fluctuated the great mass of the Tory party, who did not like the house of Hanover because it had no hereditary right, who did not like the Pretender because he was a Roman Catholic. This party objected to both possible solutions: they lived in the vague hope that the Pretender might turn Protestant, that some unforeseen circumstance would intervene, that Queen Anne would last their time. For persons in a private station, such a state of mind was very possible and very natural; but it was of this very party that Bolingbroke was the spokesman and the leader, and he was a minister, — he could not well remain without a distinct policy. Queen Anne, though not old, was often ill; she was suspected to be, and we now know she was, very near her death: he must make a choice.

Yet which king was Bolingbroke to choose? If he chose the house of Hanover, he himself ought not to be minister: this was the Whig candidate; this was the candidate whom his party disliked, at whom they murmured, whom they declined to support. A Tory ministry which should bring in the house of Hanover was like a Derbyite ministry that should propose Free Trade or reform of Parliament; it was

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a ministry which tried to maintain its existence by denying its party tenets. Probably in those times a Tory ministry could not have done what we have seen them do in our own time: party spirit ran much stronger in Queen Anne's time than in ours. The political contentions of London were like the contests at a borough election now: at three o'clock on the polling day it is very difficult to change your politics and keep your character. So it was in London then: a fierce strife raged; Whig society and Tory society were separated like two hostile camps, and a deserter from one to the other was sure of contemptuous hatred from those he left and of contemptuous patronage from those to whom he came. Bolingbroke could not do even once that which Mr. Disraeli has done twice.

Bolingbroke's enemies have been very anxious to fix on him a formed design to bring in the Pretender. He would doubtless have been very glad to do so, if he could have formed a coherent scheme; but he could not. Oxford was far too moderate and timid a man to break the law or to plan to break it: he had himself supported the Act of Settlement; he knew that the Hanoverian succession, though not popular to the imagination of any class, was acceptable to the reason of the most thinking class; he knew that the aristocracy, the large towns, and all the cultivated part of the community, were in favor of it; he knew that as the aristocratic classes had the command of the House of Lords, of the small boroughs, and of very many counties, as the great towns were of themselves favorable, the house of Hanover was sure of a majority in Parliament; he knew that the general vulgar, and especially the rural vulgar, who were favorable to the house of Stuart, though numerically strong, were but weak in parliamentary representation. He was probably a party to some covert intrigues, for intrigue was intrinsically agreeable to him; but in reality he was too timid to abandon the plain and legal

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course for a tortuous and illegal one. Bolingbroke had, on the other hand, a constitutional predilection for violent courses, and no particular objection to an illegal course. If he could have turned out Oxford, if he could have carried his party with him, he would certainly have contrived some scheme for proclaiming the Pretender at Queen Anne's death; but even he was not mad enough to commit himself to a definite plan before he knew that he should have the power to execute it. In the mean time "Tom" Harley, the Prime Minister's brother, exactly expressed the position of the ministry: "We ought," he said, "to be better or worse with the court of Hanover than we are."* The case, as men saw it then, was simple: the Queen was daily approaching the grave, the ministry in power were uncertain what to do in the event of her death: they had "no settled intention" of breaking the law, Bolingbroke tells us;† but he does not venture to contend that they had a settled intention of obeying it, — they were drifting to a crisis without a plan.

Nor was Bolingbroke comfortable while the Queen lived: she herself did not like him. A smaller person has never been placed by the caprice of fate amid great affairs than the "good Queen Anne." She had not, Swift says, "a sufficient stock of amity"‡ for more than one person at a time; she was always choosing a favorite upon whom to concentrate her affections exclusively. Her comprehension was as limited as her affections. She seriously objected, it is

* Letter to Robert Harley, June 7, 1712. Bolingbroke says in his sketch "Of the State of Parties at the Accession of King George I.": — "His [Harley's] whole management in the mean time was contrived to keep up a kind of general indetermination in the party about the succession; which made a man of great temper once say to him with passion that 'he believed no other minister, at the head of a powerful party, would not be better at Hanover, if he did not mean to be worse there."

† "No formed design" and "no settled resolution" are the words he uses (Letter to Sir William Wyndham). — ED.

‡ See page 190, note.

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said, to one minister* for appearing before her in a tie-wig instead of a full-bottom; and even if this anecdote has been exaggerated by continued narration, it expresses the sort of objections which ruled her mind and determined her conduct. She had a strong objection to all license; decorum was a sort of morality to her, as to most great ladies; she would have been much puzzled to fix where manners ended and where morals began. Bolingbroke was license personified; and therefore she distrusted and disliked him. She did not altogether approve, either, of the peace of Utrecht; she probably did not understand the details, but she evidently understood that it was a "perplexing matter," and "not the sort of thing to which she had been accustomed under Lord Marlborough." The original strength of the Tory ministry had been in the Queen's predilection for Miss Hill, afterwards Lady Masham: Harley ruled Miss Hill, and Miss Hill ruled the Queen. But the Queen was not quite sure about Miss Hill; one of her tastes was a taste for aristocracy, and she was half ashamed of having taken a great liking to a waiting-maid who had been placed about her. She had an old predilection also for the Duchess of Somerset, by birth the last of the Percys, whose husband was a Whig: Swift was never easy as to the effect of this friendship; he said, "The Duchess of Somerset is a proud woman, but I will pull her down,"† — so he libeled her,‡ which did not make her more propitious to him or his masters. There was always a danger that the

* Harley; she said she supposed he would appear in his night-cap next! This was so rigid a point of court etiquette that the usher who received Prince Eugene on his arrival in England refused to conduct him to the Queen till his equipage came and a full-bottomed wig could be obtained, and Bolingbroke scandalized the whole court (and very likely the Queen as well) by defying this rule and taking the Prince to the drawing-room as he was. See note to Swift's "Treatise on Good Manners and Good Breeding," in Scott's edition; also "Journal to Stella," Jan. 6, 1712. — Ed.

† Very likely he thought it, and he certainly acted it; but there is no evidence that he said it. — Ed.

‡ "The Windsor Prophecy," which cost him dear in the end. — Ed.

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ex-waiting-maid,* on whom all depended, should be discarded as the Duchess of Marlborough had been discarded; that the Duchess of Somerset might become prime favorite in her stead; that the policy of the government, and all the persons of our rulers, should be again changed by the inexplicable caprice of a quiet old lady.

And Bolingbroke had another difficulty: the distrust of him was not confined to Queen Anne: it extended through his party, and was an inevitable result of his peculiar position. He was an eloquent man without prejudices, speaking the prejudices of men who could not speak; but the speechless client and the eloquent advocate differ in nature so much that they can never much like or well understand each other. The Tory party knew that when Bolingbroke expressed their favorable conviction, he did not himself believe a word of what he was saying; and they could not tell what he did believe. And being for the most part regular men of middle life, from the agricultural counties, they did not much like to trust as their leader a young man of loose life about town. After the peace of Utrecht, especially, he could not tell what they would think and they could not tell what he would do: they could never have anticipated his doing anything so mean as that, and he could never understand what disgrace there was in so obvious a diplomatic stratagem as breach of faith. In our own time it is easy to vex Tories: you have only to ask, "What is Dizzy's next move?" Such short words would not have suited our formal ancestors; but many a courteous Whig doubtless asked many a Tory, "What is to be my Lord Bolingbroke's next fine stroke of policy?" and the Tory could not have known what to say. So long as Oxford was at the head of affairs, common men felt that there was

*Not an "ex" at all: the Queen said she never intended to make a great lady of her, and only ennobled her husband on condition that she should still perform her duties as maid. Burnet, note previously quoted. — ED.

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still something ordinary about the government; but if Bolingbroke were to become sole minister, or chief minister, we should be subjected to the bold schemes of undiluted genius.

In this difficult position, Bolingbroke showed great ability. He could not indeed remove its irremovable defects,—he could not declare for the house of Hanover and he could not declare for the house of Stuart, he could not remove the dislike which a dull queen and a dull party felt for a brilliant man; but what could be done, he did. He showed great parliamentary ability, and was ever ready with wonderful eloquence. He pleased his party by a schism bill, agreeable to High-Churchmen and disagreeable to Dissenters. He obtained the favor of the waiting-maid, if he could not obtain that of the Queen her mistress. Miss Hill (or Lady Masham, as she now was) was a sort of relation of Oxford's; and this had first brought them together. For a long time the union was firm: he gave her much counsel and some money, and she gave him much power. But Oxford had a conscience, or vestiges of a conscience, in the use of public money: he was not ready to give Miss Hill or Miss Hill's brother all that they wanted. Swift puts it that he was too careful of the public interest for the corruption of the time;* or as we should put it, he would not bribe without limit against the public interest out of the public treasury. But Bolingbroke had no scruples: he bid higher; he gave Miss Hill and "Jack Hill" all he could, and promised that they should have more if they would make him first minister and maintain him as such. He himself may tell the result:—"The Earl of Oxford was removed on Tuesday; the Queen died on Sunday. What a world is this! and how does Fortune banter us!" †

* "His avarice for the public was so great that it neither consisted with the present corruptions of the age nor the circumstances of the time."—"Inquiry into the Behavior of the Queen's Last Ministry."

† Letter to Swift, Aug. 3, 1714.

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Such was the close of three years of intrigue: he had bribed the waiting-maid just when the mistress was no more.

Nor at the moment was this the worst. The Queen's distrust of Bolingbroke had lasted till her death. The white staff, — the "magic wand," as Bolingbroke calls it,* — long disused in English politics, but then the symbol of the Lord High Treasurer and of the Prime Minister, had been taken from Oxford, but it had not been given to any one; Bolingbroke could not gain it for himself. It was arranged that the Treasury should be put into commission, as it had been in King William's time and as it always now is. Bolingbroke was to continue Secretary of State, and be in fact principal minister; yet he was not to have the indefinite power of the Lord Treasurer, the mystic power of the white staff. But on her death-bed Queen Anne felt that Bolingbroke could not be trusted even so far. She was dying, and knew that she was dying; she doubtless felt it was her duty to place the administration in the hands of some one who would obey the law on her death. She did not like the family of Hanover; she had the most keen repugnance to the presence of any of them in England during her life, — she could not endure to see her successor close at hand, and it probably never struck her as a matter of duty to save the country from a possible convulsion of civil war. She was a very little-minded woman, but at the same time she was a decorous woman and a well-meaning woman: she would not have planned or dared or wished to break the law which she had passed. As death was coming upon her, she knew that the practical premiership of Bolingbroke would endanger the security of the Act of Settlement: of all statesmen he was least likely to obey it, and therefore most unfit to be Prime Minister when it was of critical importance to obey it. Obscurely perhaps, but effectually, Queen Anne felt this: she

*Letter to Sir William Wyndham.

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gave the white staff to Shrewsbury, and Bolingbroke's three days of premiership were at an end.

Probably Bolingbroke felt the disaster the more that he was obliged to seem to assent to it. Shrewsbury had been acting as confidential adviser to the Queen for some time, to Bolingbroke's dismay. He knew, he said, how he stood with Oxford, — that was open war; but how he stood with Shrewsbury he did not know.* As soon as the Queen was despaired of, the Privy Council was summoned, and by ordinary rule only those summoned should attend; a ministry thus secures a Privy Council of chosen friends. But at this meeting two Whig dukes — the Duke of Somerset and the Duke of Argyle — attended, though not summoned; and by their influence the Council was induced to ask the Queen to make Shrewsbury High Treasurer, and Bolingbroke was obliged to assent. Neither in the nation nor at the court had he substantial influence or effectual power.

He had in truth no alternative. A frantic bishop — Atterbury, Bishop of Rochester — wanted him to proclaim the Pretender: but Bolingbroke, though a hot-headed statesman, had a notion of law and a perception of obvious consequences, — he was not a hot-headed divine: he knew that by law George I. must be proclaimed at once; he knew that Shrewsbury, who wielded the white staff which every one would obey, would at once proclaim George I.; he knew that he could not himself command the obedience of a watchman. All the force of government had at once passed from him, and he acquiesced in the new order of things; he assisted at the proclamation of George I.

The law had indicated the steps which should be taken in case of the Queen's death, and before her successor could be brought over from Germany. A document was produced by the Hanoverian minister, naming Lords Justices who were to administer the government until the arrival of George I.; of these

*Arbuthnot to Swift, July 17, 1714.

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Lords Justices, Bolingbroke of course was not one, — they were all sound Whigs, and steady friends to the house of Hanover. As Bolingbroke had for four years been wielding the force of government so as to give pain to them, they immediately began to exercise it so as to give pain to him. They appointed Addison as their secretary; desired all documents to be addressed to him; and though Bolingbroke was still in high office, and had at the last moment been real Prime Minister, they kept him waiting at their door with studied circumstances of indignity, which were much remarked on then and which much tried his philosophy.

It would, however, have been well for Bolingbroke if mere indignities like these had been all which was in store for him, or all which he deserved. When Parliament met, zealous Whigs naturally began to murmur a good deal as to the past. Bolingbroke had ruled them hardly during his reign. His ministry had removed Marlborough from his appointments; his ministry had expelled Walpole from the House of Commons. Walpole would most likely have said that the Whig "innings" had arrived, and that the actions of their predecessors must be scrutinized. Bolingbroke for a time affected to fear nothing; Oxford went to and fro in London, and Bolingbroke followed his example. All at once he changed his policy: he appeared at the theater in state, and took pains while there to attract attention; went home, changed his dress, and fled to France.

In truth, he was thoroughly frightened. He declared that "his blood was," he understood, "to have been the cement of a new alliance"* between the moderate Tories and the Whigs. Some have traced this notion to the hints of Marlborough;† but it was

* Letter to Lord Lansdowne, March 27, 1715; see first ed. "Biographia Britannica" (1760), article "St. John," or Swift's Works, Vol. xvi., page 289.

† Bolingbroke himself plainly intimates as much in the letter to Sir William Wyndham, though he denies that it swayed his course. — ED.

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most likely due as much to Bolingbroke's own conscience. He knew well that the secret negotiations prior to the peace of Utrecht would not bear even fair scrutiny; he knew that they were now to be subjected to hostile scrutiny: even from impartial judges he could only expect condemnation, and his case would now be tried by his enemies. His life indeed was in no danger, — neither the nation nor the party opposed to him were inclined to bloodshed; but he felt he was in danger of something. His guilty conscience magnified the possibilities of punishment; to escape them, he did exactly what was worst for his reputation, — though it was as much as pleading guilty, he fled.

He was attainted as a traitor in his absence; and there may be legal doubt as to whether the attainder was deserved. That a minister who advises his sovereign to violate a treaty, and who violates it accordingly, is worthy of severe punishment, will be admitted by every one; and that Bolingbroke had done this is beyond question or dispute. But this offense does not amount to high treason, and the details of an incidental transaction as to the town of Tournay had to be pressed into the service; and it required much stretching to make these amount even to a constructive treason. But whatever might be the legal correctness or the incorrectness of the precise punishment inflicted on Bolingbroke is scarcely material now. He well deserved a bill of "pains and penalties"; and whether he was or was not visited with the very penalty that was most suitable does not matter much.

On Bolingbroke's arrival in France, he looked about him for a while. He was at once solicited by the emissaries of the Pretender; but he deliberated for some time, and it would have been wiser for him to have deliberated longer. He well knew that though there was much latent Jacobite sentiment in England, there was no good material for a Jacobite rebellion.

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Many squires and rectors and peasants would have been glad to see the legitimate king restored; but their zeal was not very active, — it belonged to the region of traditional sentiment and vague prejudice rather than to that of practical and vigorous life. The house of Hanover had the force of the government and the *sense* of the country in its favor; it was in possession, and Bolingbroke was aware that the Jacobites could not expel it from possession. He knew all this well, but his passions were too strong for his judgment: from excitability, restlessness, and rage, he joined the Pretender. He could not help being busy, and hoped or half hoped to be revenged on his enemies.

He could not, however, long agree with his new associates. The descent from actual office to imaginary office was too sudden; to many men it was pleasing to be Secretary of State to a mock king, but it was very painful to one who had just been Secretary to a real queen. His contempt, too, for the Irish associates of the Pretender was unbounded: he saw that they were hot-headed and ignorant men, who knew nothing of the country which they hoped to rule, whom that country would not endure for a day. He knew that the Roman Catholics in England were a small and unpopular body, and their aid more dangerous than their enmity. The genuine Jacobites distrusted him also. He said that they were untrustworthy because they were fools, and they said that he was untrustworthy because he was a traitor. This could not last: after a brief interval, he left the Pretender and his court; they began to slander him, and he began to speak much evil of them.

With his secession from the Jacobites, Bolingbroke's active career ends; he was afterwards only an aspirant for a career. He was after several years permitted to return to England, and to enjoy his estate though he was an attainted traitor; but the attainder was not reversed, and while it was in force

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he could not take his seat in the House of Lords, or hold any office whatever. He wrote much against Walpole, but he did not turn out Walpole. On one occasion he was much mortified because Pulteney and the practical opponents of Walpole said that the support of his name rather weakened than strengthened them. He gave in a long memorial of suggestions to George I.; but the King said they were "bagatelles." He then fancied that he should become minister because of the support of Lady Suffolk, George II.'s mistress; but Lady Suffolk had no influence, and Queen Caroline, who had predominant influence, supported Walpole. He then hoped to be minister under the Prince of Wales, George II.'s son, and wrote a treatise on a "Patriot King" for that prince's use; but George II. outlived his son, and he was saved the mortification of seeing how little that small prince would have carried out his great ideas. Though he survived Queen Anne more than thirty years, he never after her death attained to a day's power in England. Three years of eager unwise power, and thirty-five of sickly longing and impotent regret, — such, or something like it, will ever be in this cold modern world the fate of an Alcibiades.

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*SIR GEORGE CORNEWALL LEWIS.**

(1863.)

FEW more curious sights were, not long since, to be seen in London than that of Sir G. C. Lewis at the War Office. What is now a melancholy recollection was, when we used to see it, an odd mixture of amusing anomalies. The accidental and bit-by-bit way in which all minor business is managed in England has drifted our public offices into scattered, strange, and miscellaneous places; it has drifted the war minister into the large drawing-room of an old mansion, which is splendid enough to receive fashionable people and large enough to receive a hundred people. In this great and gorgeous apartment sat, a few months since, a homely scholar in spectacles, whose face bore traces of sedentary labor, and whose figure was bent into the student stoop. Such a plain man looked odd enough in such a splendid place; but it was much more odd to think that that man in that place supremely regulated the War Department of England. The place should have been a pacific drawing-room, and the man was a pacific student: he looked like a conveyancer over deeds, like a scholar among treatises, like a jurist making a code; he looked like the last man to preside over martial pomp and military expeditions.

So *unique* a man as Sir George Lewis has, in truth, rarely been lost to this country. Most men, most politicians especially, fall easily into some ready-made classification, — belong to one of the recognized groups

* A Dialogue on the Best Form of Government. By the Right Hon. Sir G. C. Lewis, Bart., M. P. London: 1863.

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of ordinary character; political life has gone on so long that we have ascertained the principal species of statesmen, and have a fixed name ready for each: but Sir George Lewis, as all who knew him in the least well will testify, did not belong exactly to any received type. People were puzzled how to classify a man who wrote on the Astronomy of the Ancients, the Fables of Babrius, and Roman History *before* there was history, and who was yet able to fill three difficult Cabinet offices in quick succession. He wrote what most Cabinet ministers would think it too much and too hard to read; no German professor, from the smoke and study of many silent years, has ever put forth books more bristling with recondite references, more exact in every technicality of scholarship, more rich in matured reflection, than Sir George Lewis found time, mind, and scholarlike curiosity to write in the very thick of eager English life: and yet he was never very busy, or never seemed so. In the extremity of the "Trent" difficulty — when, as he was inclined to think, a war with America was impending, when a war minister might be pardoned for having no time for general reflection — Sir George Lewis found time, at three o'clock on a busy parliamentary day, to discuss with the writer of these lines for some twenty minutes the comparative certainty (or rather *un*certainty) of the physical and moral sciences. It was difficult to know what to make of such a man.

The difficulty was the greater because he made no pretense to be a marvel of versatile ability. When Lord Brougham was Chancellor, he was always doing — his enemies said for display, his friends said from a certain overflow of miscellaneous activity — many out-of-the-way matters; according to one legend, he even wrote a treatise on hydrostatics for the Society of Useful Knowledge which was so full of blunders that it could not be published. Many statesmen have had the vanity of variety: but if ever there was a plain man, an unpretending man, a man who in

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matters of business affected to be *par negotiis neque supra*,* that man was Sir George Lewis; the objection to him was that he was too prosaic, too anxiously safe, too suspicious of everything showy. It was not possible for an enemy — or for an opponent, for he had no enemies — to hint that Sir George Lewis's miscellaneous books were written from a love of display; they were written from a bent of nature, from the born love of dry truth.

To those, however, who had an opportunity of accurately observing Sir George Lewis, there was no difficulty in making him out; he was so simple and natural that he explained himself. His principal qualities were all of a plain and homely species; and though it may not be possible to give a likeness of them, yet a brief description may easily give an idea and an approximation.

The specialty of his mind was a strong simplicity: he took a plain, obvious view of every subject which came before him. Ingenuities, refinements, and specious fallacies might be suggested around him in any number or in any variety, but his mind was complication-proof; he went steadily through each new ambiguity, each new distinction, as it presented itself. He said, in unadorned but apt English, "The facts are these and these: the new theory concerning them is so and so; it accounts for facts Nos. 1, 2, and 3, but fails to account for facts Nos. 4, 5, and 6." Of course he was not uniformly right, — we shall show that there were some kinds of facts and some sorts of events which he was by mental constitution not able wholly to appreciate; but his view of every subject, though it might not be adequate, though it might be limited, was always lucid. His mind was like a registering machine with a patent index: it took in all the data, specified, enumerated them, and then indicated with unmistakable precision what their sum total of effect precisely was. The index might

* "Equal to business and nothing more."

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be wrong, — though it pretty generally was right, — but nobody could ever mistake for a moment what it meant and where it was.

Few men ever kept apart in civil matters so well, what in medical matters would be called the "diagnosis" and the "prescription." Most men mix, even to themselves, their view of what is with their suggestion of what should be: you could not have made Sir George Lewis mix the two, — his mind on such points was almost a tedious formality. He would say, "The facts proved are so and so; from these there are the following probable inferences. If you wish to alter the present circumstances and to produce others, you must do so and so." When a man came to him with a plan, he asked, "What is your object?" Until he got a plain answer to that, and a proof that the object was good, he never looked at the plan. All this in theory may seem very obvious and very trite: nothing is so easy as to be sensible on paper. The only true theory of transacting business is a simple matter, which has been known for hundreds of years; any part of that theory in print looks stupid, and not worth saying: yet in real life, especially in political life, how few great actors are there! In politics the issues to be determined are for the most part plain and simple; but they are exciting, are embedded in rhetoric and overlaid with irrelevant matter: a certain strong simplicity sweeps away all these outside matters. Talking to Sir George Lewis on a pending political matter was like reading a chapter of Aristotle's "Politics": you might think the view incomplete, but there were the same pregnant strength and matter-of-fact simplicity.

One great advantage of this sort of mind Sir George Lewis noted in an article in the *Edinburgh Review*, which, though when published anonymous, may now be quoted as his: —

"When Demosthenes was asked what was the first and second and third qualification of an orator, he answered, 'Delivery'; in like

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manner, if we were asked what is the first and second and third qualification of an English statesman, we would answer, 'Intelligibility.' As in oratory, the most eloquent words and the wisest counsels will avail but little if they are not impressed by voice and manner on the minds of an audience; so integrity and public spirit will fail to command confidence, if the course adopted is intricate and inexplicable."*

Sir George Lewis could not have described his own sort of mind better if he had been trying to do so: he *could* not be intricate or perplexed. On those rare occasions in politics when it is useful to be ambiguous, he failed; when he was Home Secretary, he could not diffuse that useful mist over delicate difficulties which was now and then desirable, and in which Sir George Grey has succeeded. An unbroken fluency in indefinite half-truths was simply impossible to Sir George Lewis; he could not be said to fail in it, for he did not attempt it, — his mind was unsuited to ambiguity, whether artful or natural: but on those all-but universal occasions when only a plain, intelligible statement of an important proposition was required, his solid vigor was appropriate. He could never have appealed to the people by the felicitous attraction of his words, but he had an even surer source of popularity in the certain intelligibility of his plans.

The last words of his last book show the sort of grave moderation with which he regarded politics, as wise as any of which he ever made use. They are the judgment in which the reflective man of the world sums up the arguments of the advocates of different forms of government.

"Each one of you, in to-day's discussion, has been able to show specious — perhaps strong — grounds in favor of his opinion. Monarchicus can say with truth that the testimony of experience is in

* Review of Lord John Russell's "Memorials of Fox," January, 1858; reprinted (with trivial changes for the worse) in "Administrations of Great Britain," as the "Addington, Pitt, and Grenville Administrations." This passage refers to Pitt's fast-and-loose course after resigning office in 1801 on the Catholic question and virtually agreeing to bolster Addington. — ED.

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his favor; that the vast majority of nations, now and at all former periods of time, have been governed by monarchs; and that a plural or republican government is an intricate machine, difficult to work and constantly tending to relapse into monarchy. Aristocraticus can argue that aristocracy is the government of intelligence and virtue, and that it is a just medium between the two extremes of monarchy and democracy; while Democraticus can dwell upon the splendid vision of a community bound together by the ties of fraternity, liberty, and equality, exempt from hereditary privilege, giving all things to merit, and presided over by a government in which all the national interests are faithfully represented. But even if I were to decide in favor of one of these forms and against the two others, I should not find myself nearer the solution of the practical problem: a nation does not change the form of its government with the same facility that a man changes his coat. A nation in general only changes the form of its government by means of a violent revolution; this is not a moment when reason is in the ascendent, and when the claims of force can be safely disregarded. The party which is uppermost in the revolution dictates the form of government, and pays little attention to abstract theories unless it be those which coincide with its own views. The past history of a nation, its present interests, its present passions and antipathies, the advice of favorite leaders, the intervention of foreign governments, all exercise a powerful influence at such a crisis in determining the national decision. Such is the rude process by which one form of government is actually converted into another; very unlike the gentle and rational method which is assumed by the constructors of Utopias. Besides, the political preferences of a people are in general determined by habit and mental association; and though the newly introduced constitution may be intrinsically better than its predecessor, yet the people may dislike it and refuse it the benefit of a fair trial: it may therefore fail not from its own defectiveness, but through the ill-will and reluctance of those by whom it is worked.

"There are some rare cases in which a nation has profited by a revolution. Such was the English revolution of 1688, in which the form of the government underwent no alteration, and the person of the king was alone changed. It was the very minimum of a revolution; it was remarkable for the absence of those accompaniments which make a revolution perilous, and which subsequently draw upon it a vindictive reactionary movement. The late Italian revolution has likewise been successful; by it the Italian people have gained a better government, and have improved their political

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condition. It was brought about by foreign intervention; but its success has been mainly owing to the moderation of the leaders in whom the people had the wisdom to confide, and who have steadily refrained from all revolutionary excesses.

"The history of forcible attempts to improve governments is not, however, cheering. Looking back upon the course of revolutionary movements, and upon the character of their consequences, the practical conclusion which I draw is, that it is the part of wisdom and prudence to acquiesce in any form of government which is tolerably well administered, and affords tolerable security to person and property. I would not indeed yield to apathetic despair, or acquiesce in the persuasion that a merely tolerable government is incapable of improvement. I would form an individual model, suited to the character, disposition, wants, and circumstances of the country; and I would make all exertions, whether by action or by writing, within the limits of the existing law, for ameliorating its existing condition and bringing it nearer to the model selected for imitation: but I should consider the problem of the best form of government as purely ideal, and as unconnected with practice; and should abstain from taking a ticket in the lottery of revolution, unless there was a well-founded expectation that it would come out a prize."*

This sober simplicity is not to the taste of many people: many wish to find in politics a sort of excitement; they wish that public affairs should be managed in a rather theatrical way, in order that they themselves may have the pleasure of reading a stimulating series of brilliant events. People who went to Sir George Lewis for excitement were very likely to be disappointed: he was sure to knock the gloss off things. "People," he would observe, "who know how things are managed, know that the oftener Cabinets meet the better. Ignorant persons fancy that when Cabinets meet often there is something wrong; but that is a mistake, — it is in the long vacation and in the country that some ministers do something brilliant and extraordinary that is much objected to. When ministers get together, they can agree on something plain and satisfactory." He always talked of the Cabinet as if it were a homely sort of committee.

* "Dialogue on the Best Form of Government."

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At bottom, perhaps, he did not much object to be thought a little commonplace. "In *my* opinion," he said (and perhaps there is no harm in adding that it was in reference to the Suez Canal), "in nine cases out of ten, cure is better than prevention. If it be ever necessary to hold Egypt, then fight for Egypt. By looking forward to all possible evils, we waste the strength that had best be concentrated in curing the *one* evil which happens." Those who wish that the foreign affairs of England should be managed according to a far-seeing and elaborate policy will not like such voluntary short-sightedness; but the English people themselves rather like to have the national course fixed by evident, palpable, and temporary circumstances.

Some people thought Sir George Lewis obstinate; and in one sense he was so. No one was a better colleague; no one, after full discussion, was readier to take a share in the responsibility for measures of which he did not entirely approve the whole: but though he gave up his proposals, he did not alter his opinion. It may be said of him that he could not alter it. Most men's conclusions are framed upon fluctuating considerations, some of which are very indistinctly present to their minds, and most of which it would puzzle them to state shortly: Sir George Lewis knew exactly what were the facts upon which he grounded his opinion, and what his inference from those facts; unless you gave him new facts, he could not help drawing the same inference. This was one of the comforts of dealing with him: you always knew exactly where you would find his mind; unless the data had altered, you might be sure his inference from the data would be unchanged.

It may be added that his inference was almost sure to be exactly sound. His data might be limited: as we shall show, there were some kinds of facts which, from a limitation of nature, he did not thoroughly appreciate; when such facts were in question,

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his conclusion was likely enough to be wrong, for he was arguing rightly on incomplete premises. But no one could gainsay the correctness of his inference from what he did see; he was the soundest judge of probability we have ever known. The facts being admitted to be so and so, what will be the consequence of those facts? upon this question, few judgments, if any, in England were better than that of Sir George Lewis.

It is this judgment of probability which makes the man of business. The data of life are accessible, their inference uncertain; a sound judgment on these data is the secret of success to him who possesses it, and the reason why others trust him. It is this that men call a *sound* understanding; it is this that Napoleon had in mind when he said that a man should be *carré à la base.**

To this straightforward simplicity of understanding, Sir George Lewis added the most complete education perhaps of any man of his time. He did not believe in what has been called *speciality;* at least he confined it to the lower grades of practical life and literary labor. He has observed:—

"The permanent officers of a department are the depositories of the official traditions; they are generally referred to by the political head of the office for information upon questions of official practice: and knowledge of this sort acquired in one department would be useless in another. If, for example, the chief clerk of the criminal department of the Home Office were to be transferred to the Foreign Office or to the Admiralty, the special experience which he has acquired in the Home Office, and which is in daily and hourly requisition for the assistance of the Home Secretary, would be utterly valueless to the Foreign Secretary or to the First Lord of the Admiralty. . . . The same person may be successively at the head of the Home Office, the Foreign Office, the Colonial Office, and the Admiralty; he may be successively President of the Board of Trade and Chancellor of the Exchequer: but to transfer an experienced clerk from one office to another would in general be like transferring a skillful naval officer to the army, or appointing a military

* "Square at the bottom."

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engineer officer to command a ship of war. A similar distinction may be observed in other branches of practical life. Thus, an architect may direct the execution of different classes of buildings; he may give plans for palaces, churches, courts of justice, bridges, private dwellings: but the subordinate workmen whom he employs retain their separate functions unchanged, — a carpenter does not become a mason, a painter or glazier does not become an ironmonger or plasterer." *

He sincerely believed (and perhaps acted to excess on the belief) that a well-educated man was competent to undertake any office and to write on any subject. He would have acknowledged the truth of the saying, that the end of education was to make a good *learner*. He was at the day of his death perhaps the best learner in England; there was no sort of definite information, whether relating to public business or to books, which he did not know how to acquire and where to find. Some public men may know where to find as much political information; some scholars may know where to find as much learned information: but what other man knows so precisely the best sources of both kinds of knowledge?

He had a nearly perfect mastery over the keys of knowledge. He derived from Eton and Oxford a perfect knowledge of the classical languages, and he extended it to the day of his death. An article published in *Notes and Queries* within a week or two of that time † showed that he had read Mr. Freeman's history, ‡ — a rather formidable work, relating to the Ætolian and other Greek leagues, which was only then just published, and which is as much as many busy men read in ten years. Many English statesmen have been good classical scholars, and it is happily not difficult for those who have once well learned the languages of antiquity to retain a familiarity with its masterpieces. The very business of life, indeed, adds

* Not discoverable. — Ed.

† Third Series, iii. 281.

‡ "History of Federal Government." The perusal of this able work affords no proof of classical knowledge; but the *matter* of Lewis's critique does. — Ed.

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to these masterpieces an additional charm; for it reveals touches of discerning thought and traits of external human knowledge which the writers learned from experience, and which no one can appreciate without it. Mr. Pitt, Mr. Canning, Lord Grenville, the Marquis Wellesley, and many others of our conspicuous statesmen, have had this sort of scholarship; the knowledge of the classics was to them an intellectual luxury. But Sir George Lewis had a far more laborious scholarship than this: he had read, and knew, not only the classical writers themselves, but also terrific German treatises, in many volumes and upon the worst paper, *about* the classics, which no intellectual voluptuary would touch or look at.

In addition to his Eton and Oxford scholarship, Sir George Lewis was excellently well acquainted with modern languages, and had a fair knowledge of mathematics. But a mere enumeration of this kind does not in the least give a notion of the sort of knowledge he had: a phrase, not of the purest English, alone expresses it,—it was a knowledge which "turned up" everywhere. Hardly a subject could be started on which he could not throw an unexpected light, and to which he could not add some new fact. The sort of way in which this happened is aptly enough illustrated by Lord Stanhope's "Miscellanies," published last year.

"Mr. Windham," writes Lord Stanhope, "in his speech of Dec. 9, 1803, observes of the Martello towers that they were so called from a place of that name in Corsica; and I have quoted that sentence from him in my 'Life of Pitt.' Since my own publication, however, there has been suggested to me, by a very high authority upon all such subjects, a derivation far more probable than Mr. Windham's, and certainly, as I conceive, the right one.

S."

Right Hon. Sir George C. Lewis to Earl Stanhope.

[Extract.] April 2, 1862.

"The origin of Martello towers I believe to have been, that when piracy was common in the Mediterranean, and pirates like the

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Danes made plundering descents upon the coasts, the Italians built towers near the sea in order to keep watch and give warning if a pirate ship was seen to approach the land. This warning was given by striking on a bell with a hammer; and hence these towers were called *torri da martello.*

The same to the same.

May 7, 1862.

"I think that I have discovered, with the assistance of a friend, the origin of Windham's statement respecting Martello towers. An attack was made on the tower of Mortella, in Corsica, by the British forces both by sea and land, in February, 1794; the tower was taken after an obstinate defense, but the two attacking ships were beaten off. The circumstance is likely to have given rise to the confusion between Martello towers generally and this tower of Mortella."

And Lord Stanhope adds some additional facts showing that the derivation suggested by Sir George C. Lewis was correct.

Again, in page 40, Lord Stanhope gives an extract from a letter of Sir George Lewis:—

"Lord Grenville told my father that Pitt had formed a plan for abolishing all customs duties, and that he would have carried it into effect if the war of the French revolution had not broken out, which defeated all his financial and commercial schemes. Lord Grenville said that the amount of the public expenditure at that time rendered such a plan quite feasible."

These are two instances casually occurring in one little volume. But any one who knew Sir George Lewis would know that miscellaneous odd facts of this sort were accumulated in his memory, to what seemed an infinite number, and were at once brought out when they could be useful in illustrating anything.

As a writer this great knowledge, especially when connected with the strong love of bare truth which led him to acquire that knowledge, was not advantageous to him. He gave a mistaken credit to his readers: he fancied they loved fact and truth as much as he did. "Woe to the writer," goes a wise saying, "that exhausts his subject: his readers are exhausted

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first." Sir George Lewis always exhausted his subject if he could, and you could not have persuaded him not to do so. In proposing the dowry of the Princess Royal, he amused the House of Commons by an elaborate reference not only to the dowry of George III.'s daughters, who seemed quite far enough back for an impatient audience that wanted its dinner, but also to a perfectly forgotten Princess Royal who was George III.'s aunt. Most of his books are too full of citations and explanations; and to the last he would have been more read and more influential if he had thought often of Sydney Smith's precept, "Now, remember Noah, and be *quick*."

But though a tendency to overlay a subject with superfluous erudition was one of Sir George Lewis's defects, the possession of that available erudition was one of his greatest powers. In the present day, the usefulness of a public man is largely measured by the number of subjects which he can get up: Sir George Lewis could get up any subject; there was no probable topic on which he could not form, from the very best sources, with ease and pleasure, a clear, determinate, and exact opinion. His memory helped him; it has been compared to Macaulay's,—not that it was equal to such marvelous displays, but that it contained as much or nearly as much miscellaneous knowledge. And there was this peculiarity in it:—Macaulay's memory, like Niebuhr's, undoubtedly confounded not unfrequently inference and fact; it exaggerated; it gave not what was in the book, but what a vivid imagination inferred from the book. Sir George Lewis had none of this defect: his memory was a dry memory, just as his mind was a dry light; if he said a thing was at page 10, you might be sure it was at page 10. Somebody called him "a sagacious dictionary," and there was felicity in the expression.

Apart from this massive simplicity of understanding, and this immense accumulation of exact knowledge, there was nothing *very* remarkable in Sir George

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Lewis. It would be the greatest injustice to his memory, and be the very last thing which he would have desired, to mar the picturesque outlines of his character by concealing its limitations. He had, as we explained, some great qualities in an extraordinary measure; but in other respects he was no more than an ordinary man, and in some he was even less than one.

There was a want of brisk enthusiasm about him, both in appearance and in reality. He looked like a scholar, a thinker, and a man of business; he did not look like — he was not — a buoyant ruler or a popular orator. He was quite conscious of this himself, and would sometimes allude to it. The late Mr. Wilson, — a very vivacious and active man, — who was Secretary of the Treasury when Sir George Lewis was Chancellor of the Exchequer, used to relate that when he once was urging something rather strongly, Sir George answered, "No; I can't do it. The fact is, Wilson, you are an animal and I am a vegetable." Taken literally, this would have been a satire on himself; but it indicated his main defect, — he had always or nearly always sufficient judgment for a great statesman, but he had not always sufficient impulse.

He was *puzzled* about the passions of mankind; he had so little passion himself that it seemed to him an unknown force, which might take men to a distance which it was impossible to foresee and in a direction that could not be calculated. "When," we have heard him say, "you know a man will act for his own interest, you know how to deal with him; but if he is likely to be guided by feeling, it is impossible to predict his course." Such extreme calmness of mind is not favorable to a statesman: it is good to be without vices, but it is not good to be without temptations. It would always have been a difficulty to Sir George Lewis that he did not share the impetuous part of human nature, whether for good or evil; he was ever liable to impute to a settled design and

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intellectual self-interest what was in fact owing to an impulse of philanthropy or a gust of mere passion. He was apt to be thought cynical in opinion, though good-natured in manner and action; and in some sense he was so,—he took too external a view of human nature, and ascribed to consistent selfishness what was really produced by mixed motives and a close combination of good and evil.

He was so defective in the more conspicuous sorts of imagination that he was often thought to have no imagination; but this was an error. He could conceive well the working of a polity, the operation of a scheme, the details of a plan; his criticism on the working, say of the American Constitution, would show great power of conceiving distant causes and of predicting and analyzing strange effects: he had the business imagination,—but he had no other. He could not imagine great passions or overwhelming desires or involved character; he knew that there were such things, but he had no image of them in his mind, and no picture. He was like a man on the edge of a volcano, who dreaded an eruption but had no vision of the flames. He was thus apt to be out of sympathy with, and even to be impatient of, some elements in ordinary men's judgment. He was a little too critical of public opinion; too critical, that is, for a parliamentary statesman, for one who should try to sympathize with the master whom he must obey. Sir George Lewis hated exaggeration as much as he could hate anything; and popular opinion is always exaggerated. "There is," said Sir Stafford Northcote, "no quality for which Sir George Lewis is more remarkable than for a quiet courage, which emboldens him to give utterance from time to time, and sometimes without any apparent necessity for his doing so, to propositions of the most alarmingly unpopular nature." And such courage is admirable; in this day it is much to have a statesman who, on any occasion and for any object, will withstand public

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opinion: but such opposition should be reserved for great occasions, and too much must not be expected from the mass of men. A vague tendency and loose approximation to what is right is all we can hope for from miscellaneous popular opinion; and it is not wise in a statesman to criticize too nicely, or to attempt to give to the rough practical judgment of men a fine accuracy which it can never in fact possess. Sir George Lewis was the antithesis of a demagogue: he could not take a test without a qualification; he was sure to distrust and apt to despise a popular dogma.

A slight survey — and we have only space or powers for a very slight one — will show that these qualities were as conspicuous in Sir George Lewis's writings as in his political career. Indeed, if there ever was a man whose mind was always and everywhere one and the same, Sir George was that man; he had not really a versatile mind, though his pursuits were varied. He was far too modest and wise to aim at what was impossible to him, and nature had given him sharp limitations. It was said by the *Times* of Lord Brougham, that he might have been any *one* of ten first-rate kinds of men, but that he had tried to be *all* ten, and had failed: Sir George Lewis had none of this flexibility and none of this vanity. He never tried to be a great poet or a great orator, or to be anything else but what nature made him, — a shrewd and solid thinker. He had a great faculty of research, but his matter is everywhere of the same sort; it is the same imperturbable homely sense upon finance in his Budgets, upon the Egyptology of Baron Bunsen in his "Ancient Astronomy."

Sir George Lewis's principal writings may be divided into two classes, the historical and the speculative; and it is hardly too much to say that the whole of the historical are developments in many forms of one central idea: he always devotes himself to the refutation of a hypothesis. Some previous writer

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has elaborated a theory which, Sir George Lewis maintains, rests on no basis of evidence, and which he wishes to dispel: some one has seen a *mirage* and related it as a fact, Sir George Lewis wishes to dispel the *mirage.*

His earliest work of this sort was the "Origin and Formation of the Romance Language." M. Raynouard, a distinguished French scholar, had expounded a very curious and remarkable theory as to the breaking up of the Latin language. It is certain that good Latin was once spoken at Rome; it is certain that the Romans conquered the rest of Italy, France, and Spain; it is certain that in each of these countries a modern language, analogous to the Latin and derived from the Latin, is now spoken: how then did the Latin break up? how then were the new languages formed? M. Raynouard maintained that they were formed by means of an intermediate language. He held that the Romance language, which was purely spoken in the times of the Troubadours, and which is still corruptly spoken in Provence, was a language once used in the same form all over Europe; that it was the same tongue in France, in Portugal, in Italy, and in Spain; and that as a person who spoke Latin would have been universally intelligible at one time, so a person who spoke Romance would have been universally understood at a subsequent time. This idea of a single diffused Middle Age language Sir George Lewis undertakes to dispel; he thinks it a dream and a theory. He says that the Latin broke up under different circumstances, with different velocities, and in different modifications, in the different states of Europe. There was a certain general resemblance, he holds, in the changes which were in progress, whether in Italy or Spain, France or Portugal, because those changes in all these countries were produced by the same causes. The invasion of the barbarians, the fall of the Roman Empire, and the somewhat mysterious movement which tends to break

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up the old rhetorical and synthetic languages and replace them by analytic and conversational languages, were common causes, operating alike in all countries where Latin had been spoken. But though the change in all the languages was in the same general direction, it was not at the same rate, nor was it identical in details. There has, according to Sir G. Lewis, never been a single vernacular language spoken through Europe since Latin was so spoken. The theory of Raynouard is, according to Sir George Lewis's characteristic language, an "unsupported and imaginary hypothesis."

This essay on the Romance language was republished by Sir George within a few months of his death, and is worth reading as an illustration of his mode of thought and argument. The burden of proof is upon Raynouard: he says there was a common language at a certain date; where then is that language? what were its parts of speech,—its verbs, its pronouns, and its substantives? Let us look at them in the different countries of Europe at the time in question, and prove that the language was uniform by the identity of its forms. Accordingly, Sir George Lewis goes through the earliest known forms of the Italian, Spanish, Provençal, and French languages, and he shows that at the earliest stage they were *not* identical. He characteristically says:—

"The importance and interest of the philological problem which is treated in the following pages are much increased by the fact that it lies entirely within the historical period; and that not only the original and the derivative languages, but also the circumstances attending the transition, are known by authentic evidence and by an unbroken tradition. It is therefore a problem which admits of solution by demonstrative arguments, and without recourse to a series of hypotheses and conjectures, weakening as the chain lengthens."*

Sir George Lewis revels, we may almost say, in the plentifulness of the evidence. He has lists of the

* Preface.

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"tenses and inflexions of Romance nouns," "new Romance nouns formed by affixes," of the degrees of comparison, pronouns, and numerals, in the Romance language, with endless similar information. He elaborately compares the earliest stages of the Italian, Spanish, and French languages with the earliest form of the Provençal: and he shows clearly and fully, what was probable enough in itself, that the earliest forms of these languages differ; that they have pursued a different history; that the Provençal is only one of the derived languages, with a history of its own; that there never was any one derived language generally diffused through Europe; that as soon as the use of Latin ended, distinctions of speech began. A very close political observer, who did not himself easily relinquish anything, once described Sir George Lewis as the most pertinacious man he had ever known: "He returns," it was added, "to the charge again and again, and he hardly ever fails." This was said by one who seldom read anything, who had read very little of Sir George Lewis's writing, who assuredly had never opened the treatise on the Romance languages; but if he had studied the treatise he could not have described it better, — Sir George returns again and again, with verbs and pronouns, to the charge, and he hardly ever fails. A student who continued to believe Raynouard's theory must be impervious to argument and detail-proof.

The largest of all Sir George Lewis's writings, and his acutest, strikes with the same tactics at a nobler game upon a larger field. The reception of Niebuhr's "History of Rome" is one of the most curious of recent literary phenomena. Though he really is a bold theorist on Roman history, though his narrative is by admission constructed by the imagination, he has obtained something like the credit due to an almost contemporary authority, — to a person who had some special information. He believed he had acquired, by long study and brooding, a special faculty, a peculiar divination. He tells us: —

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"All my faculties [were] directed to a single object for sixteen months, without any intermission except now and then a very few days. My sight grew dim in its passionate efforts to pierce into the obscurity of the subject; and unless I was to send forth an incomplete work, which sooner or later would have had to be wholly remodeled, I was compelled to wait for what Time might gradually bring forth. Nor has he been niggardly; but, though slowly, has granted me one discovery after another."* "The true account, it must be owned, is not always the most probable one; but when an inquirer, after gazing for years with ever-renewed undeviating steadfastness, sees the history of mistaken, misrepresented, and forgotten events rise out of mists and darkness, and assume substance and shape, as the scarcely visible aerial form of the nymph in the Slavonic tale takes the body of an earthly maiden beneath the yearning gaze of love, — when by unwearied and conscientious examination he is continually gaining a clearer insight into the connection of all its parts, and discerns that immediate expression of reality which emanates from life, — he has a right to demand that others, who merely throw their looks by the way on the region where he lives and has taken up his home, should not deny the correctness of his views because they perceive nothing of the kind. The learned naturalist who has never left his native town will not recognize the animal's track, by which the hunter is guided; and if any one on going into Benvenuto's prison, when his eyes had for months been accustomed to see the objects around him, had asserted that Benvenuto like himself could not distinguish anything in the darkness, surely he would have been somewhat presumptuous."†

It is beautiful to see the heavy care and sluggish diligence with which Sir George Lewis reckons all this poetry back into mere prose.

"The history of Niebuhr," he tells us, "has thus opened more questions than it has closed; and it has set in motion a large body of combatants, whose mutual variances are not at present likely to be settled by deference to a common authority, or by the recognition of any common principle.

"The main cause of the great multiplicity and wide divergence of opinions which characterize the recent researches into early Roman history, is the defective method which not only Niebuhr and his followers, but most of his opponents, have adopted. Instead of employing those tests of credibility which are consistently applied to modern history, they attempt to guide their judgment by the

* Preface to Vol. ii. † Introductory section of Vol. ii.

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indications of internal evidence, and assume that the truth can be discovered by an occult faculty of historical divination. Hence the task which they have undertaken resembles an inquiry into the internal structure of the earth, or into the question whether the stars are inhabited: it is an attempt to solve a problem, for the solution of which no sufficient data exist.

"The consequence is, that ingenuity and labor can produce nothing but hypotheses and conjectures, which may be supported by analogies and may sometimes appear specious and attractive, but can never rest on the solid foundation of proof. There will therefore be a series of such conjectural histories; each successive writer will reject all or some of the guesses of his predecessors, and will propose some new hypotheses of his own. But the treatment of early Roman history, though it will be constantly moving, will not advance; it will not be stationary, but neither will it be progressive; it will be unfixed and changeable, but without receiving any improvement; and it will perpetually revolve in the same hopeless circle. Like the search after the philosopher's stone or the elixir of life, it will be constantly varying its aspect under the treatment of different professors of the futile science; but truth and certainty, the aim of all rational employment of the intellect, will always be equally distant. Each new system of the early Roman constitution will be only (to use Paley's words) one guess among many; whereas he alone discovers who proves. There is indeed no doubt that long habit, combined with a happy talent, may enable a person to discern the truth where it is invisible to ordinary minds possessing no peculiar advantages; this may be observed not only in historical researches, but in every other department of knowledge: in order, however, that the truth so perceived should recommend itself to the convictions of others, it is a necessary condition that it should admit of proof which they can understand. Newton might have perceived, by a rapid and intuitive sagacity, the connection between the fall of an apple and the attraction of the earth to the sun; but unless he could have demonstrated that connection by arguments which were intelligible and satisfactory to the scientific world, his discovery would have been useless except as a mere suggestion. In like manner, we may rejoice that the ingenuity and learning of Niebuhr should have enabled him to advance many novel hypotheses and conjectures respecting events in the early history, and respecting the form of the early constitution, of Rome; but unless he can support those hypotheses by sufficient evidence, they are not entitled to our belief. It is not enough for a historian to claim the possession of a retrospective second-sight, which is denied to

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the rest of the world; of a mysterious doctrine, revealed only to the initiated. Unless he can prove as well as guess, unless he can produce evidence of the fact after he has intuitively perceived its existence, his historical system cannot be received. The oases of truth which he discerns amidst the trackless expanses of fiction and legend may be real; but until their existence can be verified by positive testimony, we have no certainty that these 'green spots in memory's waste' may not be mere mirage and optical delusion. It is an excellence in a historian of antiquity who has sufficient data to proceed upon, that he should form a vivid conception of the events described, that he should live as it were among the persons whose acts he recounts, and that he should carry his reader back into the bygone times in which his drama is placed; on the other hand, it is a fault in the modern writers who first narrated Roman history that they should have related the events as if they had never happened: but when there is a want of solid evidence, we do not render the history true by treating the events as if they were real."*

Almost the whole of Sir George Lewis's two volumes are an expansion and development of this passage: he turns Niebuhr's revelations into fancies, and his divinations into mere guesses. Since Sir George Lewis's work on Roman history, no English scholar at least has ventured to defend Niebuhr's essentially arbitrary treatment of legendary history; a historian, it is now agreed, cannot accept one legend because it suits a preconceived hypothesis, and reject another because it is inconsistent with that hypothesis, — he must take both or must reject both. We may not, and perhaps have not, attained† to a complete and accepted theory of the value of traditional evidence; there are many points on that subject which require much more delicate handling than they have received: but no one will ever revive Niebuhr's notion of an occult tact. A long acquaintance [with] and a familiar meditation upon any sort of *truth* does indeed give an instinctive sense with respect to that truth; a constant habit of comparing accurate truth with

* Chap. i., § 4.

† This piece of inverted and murdered syntax *should* read, "We have not attained, and perhaps may not attain." — Ed.

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legendary versions of the same truth would really give a student a verified knowledge, and even a quick instinctive idea, to what sort of inventions popular tradition is prone: but Niebuhr had studied legends as to times of which there are only legends; he had not compared truth with fiction, but fiction with fiction; he had not acquired a test of truth by a contact with truth, but his hot brain had brooded so long on a favorite subject that he mistook its own fancies for realities. Sir George Lewis did not mistake them.

It is sometimes said that Sir George Lewis would accept no fact of which there was not contemporary evidence, and that he set no value whatever upon any tradition in any case; but this is a mischievous exaggeration. Sir George Lewis was not the most exacting of historical critics: he considered Polybius as too strict and skeptical. Polybius thought that a historian without books, and with only oral information, could not be sure of events more than twenty years before his own birth: Sir George Lewis held that a sort of memory of leading events, accurate in substance though probably inaccurate in detail, might be preserved by tradition for about a hundred years, and that special events from special circumstances might be remembered longer; but that in such cases it was only the general outline which could be faintly traced, and only events of interest that would be preserved. After about a hundred years — after the period about which a man could hear from his grandfather — he thought for the most part there was no reliable knowledge.

Sir George Lewis's "Ancient Astronomy" might seem a deviation from his general studies. Astronomy is a physical science; and Sir George, though well enough acquainted with such sciences, did not profess to have made them a special study. He was often enough heard to say, half in jest but still with a certain meaning, "On matters of practical interest the physical sciences are less certain than the moral.

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more, for he would have been remembered better. He really had considerable powers of pointed writing: the little treatise at the head of this article shows that when he did not aim at completeness, he could write easily that which would be easily read. He had not indeed the powers of a great literary artist; it was not in his way to look at style as an alluring art: he wanted to express his opinion, and cared for nothing else. He had no literary vanity; and without the vanity that loves applause, few indeed cultivate the tact that gains applause. "If you can do without the world," says the cynic, "the world can do without you;" and it is as true to say that few, if any, gain literary fame who do not long and hunger after it.

As a sort of compensation, Sir George Lewis rose more rapidly as a parliamentary statesman than any of his contemporaries. He was in the first rank of the Liberal party; yet he entered Parliament five years after Mr. Cardwell, fifteen years after Mr. Gladstone, nineteen years after Sir Charles Wood, and forty years after Lord Palmerston. It is curious at first sight that he should have done so: he was not an attractive speaker, he wanted animal spirits, and detested an approach to anything theatrical. He had very considerable command of exact language, but he had no impulse to use it. If it was his duty to speak, he spoke; but he did not want to speak when it was not his duty, — silence was no pain and oratory no pleasure to him. If mere speaking were the main qualification for an influence in Parliament, — if, as is often said, parliamentary government be a synonym for the government of talkers and *avocats*, — Sir George Lewis would have had no influence, would never have been a parliamentary ruler. Yet we once heard a close and good observer say, "George Lewis's influence in the House is something wonderful: whatever he proposes has an excellent chance of being carried. He excites no opposition, and he commands

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great respect, and generally he carries his plan." The House of Commons, according to the saying, is wiser than any one in it;* there is an elective affinity for solid sense in a practical assembly of educated Englishmen, which always operates and which rarely errs. Sir George Lewis's influence was great not only on his own side of the House, but on the other. He had indeed probably more real weight with moderate Conservatives than with extreme Liberals: enterprise neither seemed to be nor was his *forte*, and bold men thought him rather tame. His influence was like that of Lord Palmerston: he was liked by the moderate members, whether Whigs or Tories, who think just alike, whatever they call themselves; and who are likely nowadays to rule the country, whatever name the party in power may chance to bear. He was a safe man, a fair man, and an unselfish man. He had a faculty of "patient labor," which, as he himself remarked, "*was as sure* to be appreciated when Englishmen meet together to transact business, as wit or eloquence;" and therefore it was that he had great influence in the House of Commons, and therefore it was that he rose rapidly.

He filled three Cabinet offices. The first was that of Chancellor of the Exchequer; and this was the one which he liked best, and for which he conceived himself best qualified. He had no easy time, however, during his actual tenure of the office: he had to find money for the Crimean War, the heaviest draft on the resources of the Exchequer since Waterloo; he had to break the "fundamental law of the currency," as he called it, Peel's Act, in the unexpected panic of 1857. He gave universal satisfaction as finance minister, and especial satisfaction in the City: he was clear, considerate, and it was at once felt that argument would move him if good argument could be found. He had to borrow much money; and he so managed as to be able to borrow it without undue charge to the state, and with that immediate success

* "Has more taste."—Sydney Smith, tribute to Horner in H.'s "Memoirs."

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the hypothetical historian; he is condemned to make bricks without straw. Instead of demolishing and rebuilding constitutions, instead of creating new states of society out of obscure fragments of lost writers, he is reduced to a mere arithmetical process. Accordingly, the operations of Bunsen and other modern critics upon the ancient history of Egypt rather resemble the manipulation of the balance sheet of an insolvent company by a dexterous accountant (who, by transfers of capital to income, by the suppression or transposition of items, and by the alteration of bad into good debts, can convert a deficiency into a surplus) than the conjectures of a speculative historian who undertakes to transmute legend into history.

"Egyptology has a historical method of its own. It recognizes none of the ordinary rules of evidence; the extent of its demands upon our credulity is almost unbounded. Even the writers on ancient Italian ethnology are modest and tame in their hypotheses, compared with the Egyptologists. Under their potent logic all identity disappears; everything is subject to become anything but itself. Successive dynasties become contemporary dynasties; one king becomes another king, or several other kings, or a fraction of another king; one name becomes another name; one number becomes another number; one place becomes another place.

"In order to support and illustrate these remarks, it would be necessary to analyze Bunsen's reconstruction of the scheme of Egyptian chronology. Such an analysis would be inconsistent with the main object of the present work: but a few examples will serve to characterize his method.

"Sesostris is the great name of Egyptian antiquity; even the builders of the Pyramids and of the Labyrinth shrink into insignificance by the side of this mighty conqueror. Nevertheless, his historical identity is not proof against the dissolving and recompounding processes of the Egyptological method: Bunsen distributes him into portions, and identifies each portion with a different king. Sesostris, as we have already stated, stands in Manetho's list as third king of the twelfth dynasty, at 3320 B. C., and a notice is appended to his name clearly identifying him with the Sesostris of Herodotus. Bunsen first takes a portion of him and identifies it with Tosorthrus (written Sesorthus by Eusebius), the second king of the third dynasty, whose date is 5119 B. C., being a difference in the dates of 1799 years, — about the same interval as between Augustus Cæsar and Napoleon; he then takes another portion and identifies it with Sesonchosis, a king of the twelfth dynasty; a third portion of Sesostris is finally assigned to himself. It seems that these three fragments make up the entire Sesostris, who in this

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plural unity belongs to the Ancient Empire: but it is added that the Greeks confounded him with Ramesses or Ramses of the New Empire, a king of the nineteenth dynasty, whose date is 1255 B. C.; who again was confounded with his father Sethos, which name again was transmuted into Sethosis and Sesosis.

"Lepsius agrees with Bunsen that Sesostris in the Manethonian list, who stands in the twelfth dynasty, at 3320 B. C., is not Sesostris; but instead of elevating him to the third dynasty, brings him down to the nineteenth dynasty, and identifies him with Sethos, 1326 B. C., — chiefly on account of a statement of Manetho, preserved by Josephus, that Sethos first subjugated Cyprus and Phœnicia, and afterwards Assyria and Media, with other countries farther to the east. Lepsius, moreover, holds that Ramses the son of Sethos was, like his father, a great conqueror, but that the Greeks confounded both father and son under the name of Sesostris.

"We therefore see that the two leading Egyptologists, Bunsen and Lepsius, differing in other respects, agree in thinking that Sesostris is not Sesostris; the notice appended to his name in Manetho, which identifies him with the Sesostris of Herodotus, Diodorus, and other Greek writers, is regarded by Lepsius as spurious: but here their agreement stops, — one assigns Sesostris to what is called the Old, the other to what is called the New Empire, separating his respective dates by an interval of 3793 years. What should we think if a new school of writers on the history of France, entitling themselves 'Francologists,' were to arise, in which one of the leading critics were to deny that Louis XIV. lived in the seventeenth century, and were to identify him with Hercules, or Romulus, or Cyrus, or Alexander the Great, or Cæsar, or Charlemagne; while another leading critic of the same school, agreeing in the rejection of the received hypothesis as to his being the successor of Louis XIII., were to identify him with Napoleon I. and Louis Napoleon?"*

It is well known that all these conjectures on early Egyptian history are supported by the recent discovery of the true meaning of the long-unintelligible hieroglyphic inscriptions; but Sir George Lewis does not believe they have discovered their meaning. He states the problem certainly with formidable force. It is something like this: — "Here you have inscriptions composed in a lost *language*, and written down in a *character* which is also lost. Is it to be believed that the imagination of man can first guess rightly the system of written symbols, and then guess the meaning

* Chap. vi., § 11.

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too? It is the old story: you have to interpret the dream without knowing what it is. Even supposing that you have found out, as you think, one set of written symbols, and made a language in these symbols which you can read, who will assure us that some other person will not find another set of symbols with another set of meanings in a new imaginary language?"

"The question," says Sir George Lewis, "as to the possibility of interpreting a language whose tradition has been lost, is further confused by a deceptive analogy derived from the process of deciphering. A cipher is a contrivance for disguising the alphabetical writing of a known language by a conventional change of characters; the explanation of this conventional change is called the *key*. If a document written in cipher falls into the possession of a stranger ignorant of the key, and if he can conjecture with tolerable certainty the language in which it is written, he can proceed to apply to it the rules for deciphering, which are founded upon the comparative frequency of certain letters and certain words in the given language. This process, if the document be tolerably long, is almost infallible; it is difficult to devise a cipher, sufficiently simple for frequent use, which cannot be deciphered by a skillful and experienced decipherer. But this operation supposes the language to be understood; it is a merely alphabetical process; it does not determine the meaning of a single word, — it merely strips the disguise off a word and reproduces it in its ordinary orthography. No process similar to deciphering can afford the smallest assistance towards discovering the signification of an unknown word, written in known alphabetical characters. The united ingenuity of the most skillful decipherers in Europe could not throw any light upon an Etruscan or Lycian inscription, or interpret a single sentence of the Eugubine Tables. In like manner, assuming an Egyptian hieroglyphical text to be correctly read into alphabetical characters, no process of deciphering could detect the meaning of the several words."*

It is possible, for example, that Champollion may have discovered, by comparison of† some proper names, some phonetic characters; and it is also possible that the ancient Egyptian may have had some analogy with the modern Coptic, — the same sort of analogy,

* Chap. vi., § 13.

† Text, "on," an evident typographical error. — Ed.

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perhaps, which Italian bears to Latin: but it is very difficult to be satisfied that any great knowledge could be derived from the spelling of a few letters, and the guessing of a few words as expressed in these letters.

"Where," says Sir George Lewis, "the tradition of a language is lost, but its affinity with a known language is ascertained or presumed, the attempts to restore the significations of words proceed upon the hypothesis that the etymology of the word can be determined by its resemblance, more or less close, to a word in the known language, and that the etymology of the word is a certain guide to its meaning. But although there is a close affinity between etymology and meaning, yet etymology alone cannot be taken as a sure index to meaning. When the signification of a word is ascertained, it is often difficult to determine the etymology; the Lexilogus of Buttmann, the Romance Dictionary of Diez — in fact, any good etymological vocabulary — will furnish ample evidence of this truth: but when the process is inverted, and it is proposed to determine the signification of the words of an entire language from etymological guesses, unassisted by any other knowledge, the process is necessarily uncertain and inconclusive, and can be satisfactory only to a person who has already made up his mind to accept *some* system of interpretation.

"Thus, in Italian the word *troja* signifies a sow. Diez refers the origin of this word to the old Latin expression *porcus Trojanus*, which meant a pig stuffed with other animals and served for the table; the name being an allusion to the Trojan horse. He conceives that this phrase first became *porco di troja*, and afterwards *troja* simply, with the signification of a pregnant sow. Assuming this etymology to be true, what possible ingenuity could have enabled anybody to invert the process, and to discover the meaning by the etymology if the meaning were unknown?"*

The alphabet of Baron Bunsen is very complicated. He has four classes, and an extra or later class. He has more than 1000 characters altogether:—

Ideographics, ...	620
Determinatives, ...	164
Phonetics, ...	130
Mixed, ...	55
Later alphabet, ...	100
	1069

* Chap. vi., § 13.

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And he can read a very large number of words; but we are not surprised to hear that "The system of reading the hieroglyphic characters as expounded by the Egyptologists is flexible and arbitrary. It involves the hypothesis of homophones; that is to say, of a plurality of signs for the same sound. It likewise involves a mixture of ideographic and phonetic symbols." *

Altogether, though Sir George Lewis may not be right in his bold assertion that *no* early Egyptian history is possible, he is clearly successful in proving that Baron Bunsen's history is untrue; as he expelled the conjectures of Niebuhr from Roman history, so he has expelled the conjectures of Niebuhr's great pupil from Egyptian history. Nobody who reads Sir George Lewis can doubt that Bunsen for the most part indulges in conjecture as to the language, as to the written character, and as to the history of ancient Egypt; *his* theories in future will not be accepted as facts. A better feat of iconoclasm has seldom been performed. †

These historical works might well have exhausted the leisure of a man almost always occupied in civil business; but Sir George Lewis wrote another long series of books on philosophical politics also. We have not left ourselves much space to speak of them at length, and we do not think that they need be spoken of at such great length as his historical works. We think that they represent less perfectly the best parts of his mind, and that they bear more marks of his deficiencies.

* Chap. vi., § 13.

† In the judgment of competent scholars, this portion of Lewis's work is of very unequal value. And even the unschooled can now safely say that his laborious *a priori* demonstration of the impossibility of reading the hieroglyphics is laid in the dust-heap with the million other assaults on new sciences by ignorant outsiders. Le Page Renouf published a crushing answer at the time, proving that Lewis was talking of what he neither understood nor had taken the least trouble to understand; and the best service to Lewis's memory is to quietly forget it. — ED.

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The earliest and among the most curious is an essay "On the Use and Abuse of Certain Political Terms," published in 1832. It is curiously characteristic of Sir George Lewis that at a time when England was convulsed by the almost revolutionary struggle of the Reform Bill, when all Europe still gazed with wonder at the prosperous effect of the most happy of French revolutions, Sir George Lewis should have sat down to write not on the facts of political revolution, but on the *words* of political science. After he became a practical statesman, he became more alive to political passions and less occupied with political terms; but to the last, he was too apt to wonder at great conflicts and to be pleased with verbal inquiries. In 1833 he was under the mastery of a remarkable teacher. The late Mr. Austin had little fame in his lifetime, and was so discouraged by neglect that he could not nerve himself to complete great works, of which he had finished what most men would consider the difficult part, and had only to add that which most people would think the easy part. He in this point resembled Coleridge: that great thinker has left no work which embodies his philosophy, and yet his philosophy has permeated his generation. Mr. Austin seized hold, some thirty years ago, of several strong minds, and by the help of these great minds he greatly influenced his time: you will find thoughts distinctly traceable to him, far away among people who never heard of him; his few lectures and his years of conversation were a peculiar source of nice expression and accurate thought for more than half a century, — a little bit of just though almost pedantic thought cropped suddenly up in our crude and hasty English life. Thirty years ago, Mr. Austin at the London University explained what may be called the "necessary part" of political science, and illustrated it by the best of all illustrations, — Roman law. He analyzed not a particular government, but what is common to all governments;

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not one law, but what is common to all laws; not political communities in their features of diversity, but political communities in their features of necessary resemblance. He gave politics not an interesting aspect, but a new aspect; for by giving men a steady view of what political communities *must* be, he nipped in the bud many questions as to what they ought to be or ought not to be. As a gymnastic of the intellect, and as a purifier, Mr. Austin's philosophy is to this day admirable, even in its imperfect remains: a young man who will study it will find that he has gained something which he wanted, but something which he did not *know* that he wanted; he has clarified a part of his mind which he did not know needed clarifying. Sir George Lewis was deeply penetrated by this abstract teaching; to the last day of his life, in the unphilosophical atmosphere of the War Office, he would use the phrases of, and would like allusions to, this philosophy. One source of his power as a political thinker was, that he had under Mr. Austin's guidance studied political questions (as it were) in their skeleton. Once a jurist, always a jurist:* the vast and easy command of the whole sources of juridical literature which Sir George Lewis showed in his essay "On Foreign Jurisdiction and the Extradition of Criminals," and elsewhere, is largely due to his early studies. Yet it may be doubted whether Mr. Austin's influence was entirely favorable for him. A certain school of thinkers magnify the effects of human language; calm and simple-minded students, when they see the hasty world of human beings using inaccurate and vague words, are apt to ascribe all their errors to those words, and to believe that if you could put human language right you would set the world in order. There is no greater mistake. Men are mainly deceived by their passions and their interests; they care but little for abstract truth, and rush forward to small, petty, but concrete

*"Once a heretic, always a heretic."

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objects. They catch hastily at any sort of word that justifies what they wish to do, and if it sounds well, care little for fallacies and ambiguities; the language is inaccurate, no doubt, but it is a symptom only of a mental disease. You cannot calm the passions of men by defining their words: Mr. Austin's school was apt to forget this. The early treatise of Sir George Lewis on the "Use and Abuse of Political Terms," and some of his later treatises too, are not exempt from this defect, though his strong sense and really practical turn of mind always kept it in check. A person wishing to watch his intellectual history should look carefully at this book; it is a series of exercises in Mr. Austin's class-room.

A more serious defect mars the popularity of Sir George Lewis's writings, and we think Mr. Austin is partly to blame for that too. Mr. Austin was always talking of the "formidable community of fools"; he had no popularity, little wish for popularity, little respect for popular judgment. This is a great error: the world is often wiser than any philosopher. "There is some one," said a great man of the world, "wiser than Voltaire and wiser than Napoleon: *c'est tout le monde.*" Popular judgment on popular matters is crude and vague, but it is right. And it is even more certain that a great writer on morals and politics ought not to adopt a mode of writing which excludes him from popularity: Mr. Austin's mere style did this for him. He wrote on the principle that people would be sure to comprehend what was completely expressed, but could never be trusted to supply a *hiatus* in what was incompletely expressed: his writings accordingly read like a legal document; every possible case is provided for, every ambiguity is guarded against, and — hardly any one can read them. The ordinary human mind cannot bear that method of expressing everything; it is more puzzled by such elaborate precision than by anything else. Sir George Lewis did not err in mere language,

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but he erred in treatment: Mr. Austin expands all thoughts, new and old, at just the same length, and he taught Sir George Lewis to do so also; in the present state of the moral sciences, this is absurd. Much of them is very well, though a little vaguely, understood by the world at large. It is often of great consequence to reduce them to a principle; it is often of great importance to add new truths and to give a new edge to old truth: but it is not advisable to begin with a principle and to work steadily through all its possible applications at the *same* length. If you do, the reader will say, "How this man *does* prose! why, I knew that;" and he did know it. Some of the applications of a principle are new, and should be treated at length; some are of pressing importance, and should be treated at length too: but all the consequences should not be worked out like a sum. An atmosphere of commonplace hangs over long moral didactics, and an equal expansion of what the world knows and what it does not know will not be read by the world.

Sir George Lewis did his fame serious harm by neglecting this maxim. He wrote, for example, an essay "On the Influence of Authority in Matters of Opinion," which was described by a hasty thinker as a book to prove that "when you wanted to know anything, you asked some one who knew something about it." The essay certainly abounds in acute remarks and interesting illustrations, and if these remarks and these illustrations had been printed separately it would have been a good book; but the systematic treatment has been fatal to it,—the different kinds and cases of authority are so systematically enumerated that the reader yawns and forgets.

The case is even worse with his great treatise "On the Methods of Observation and Reasoning in Politics," in two large volumes. Scarcely any one has read these volumes, and those who have are sure that their bulk was a mistake. They are written

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upon the principle that "Two and two make four" is as much unknown to the mass of men as the integral calculus; easy things are explained exactly with the same care as difficult things, and in consequence very few people read the explanations. There are many admirable parts and essays in the book: it contains an account and criticism of "political induction" as described by Mr. Mill, and an account and criticism of jurisprudence as described and understood by Mr. Austin; both these discussions are very good, and the speculations of the two thinkers are well spliced together, but they are overlaid with long explanations of what requires no explanation and discussions of what need never have been discussed. Charles Fox used to say of a very dull but able speaker,* "I always listen to that man, and then speak his speech over again:"† a dishonest writer might well do so with Sir George Lewis's writings, — there are many thoughts and a million facts in them which the world would be glad to hear, though it cannot extract them from the rest. A writer of this sort naturally did not look for profit from his laborious writings; few men have done more gratuitous work. He was disposed to agree with Mr. Mill, that "the notion of thinkers giving out doctrines for bread was a mistake," and even to hold that speculators should *pay* for the opportunity of placing their opinions before the world.

We own that we much regret this misconception of the conditions of modern writing, now that Sir George Lewis's career has been cut short in the midst. When he had life before him, it seemed less important that he should throw away fame; but now that all is over, we wish he had desired popularity

*Dr. French Laurence, one of the authors of the "Rolliad"; see Brougham and Allibone. — Ed.

†Nothing of the sort: what Fox said (*vide* Brougham, "Dr. Laurence," in "Statesmen of George III.") was, that a man *ought* to do it, as it was sure to be admirable in matter and equally sure to be new to the audience.— Ed.

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As long as you are dealing with abstractions, with perfectly elastic beams and a world without fiction,* physical science is quite certain; but as soon as you introduce the actual conditions of life, and talk of the real world in which we live, most physical sciences become as uncertain as any moral science. Take, for example, physic: if you will question your medical man, you will find that if he cures you, it will not be by the goodness of his *arguments;* a great deal of what is set down upon that subject in grave treatises appears to me to be inconsistent rubbish. And my experience at the War Office shows me that scientific evidence may be accumulated in almost any quantity for any given invention and against any given invention." A man who talked in this spirit was scarcely likely to devote many hours out of the scanty leisure of English public life to the history of physical science. Nor was Sir George Lewis attracted to the subject by its abstract scientific interest: he is at great pains to explain that he makes no pretension to such abstract mathematical knowledge as was possessed by Delambre and others, his predecessors, and that astronomy is conversant with obvious realities which have always excited human curiosity. In truth, he encountered ancient astronomy in his investigations of ancient history. He found many pretensions to ancient scientific knowledge which it was much in his way to scrutinize and disbelieve; he was in all his inquiries compelled to deal with ancient chronology, which is not to be understood except with reference to the astronomical notions of those who framed it. Such questions as "Was there a Roman year of ten months?" met him at every step. He was thus led to write a clear, compendious, and popular account of the rise of astronomical science in ancient Greece. It is not exhaustive, as most of his treatises are exhaustive; it is not, like his older treatises, supported by an available accumulation of all appropriate

*An evident misprint for "friction." — Ed.

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knowledge, for he was in some places cramped by the deficiency of his mathematics; it is not, therefore, one of the works on which his fame as a great scholar will hereafter rest: but it is a very clear, sensible, and interesting account of the interesting subject to which it relates.

Bound up with the history of Ancient Astronomy, and having but a very slender relation to it, are three essays: one on the "Early History and Chronology of the Egyptians," another on the "Early History and Chronology of the Assyrians," and a third on the "Navigation of the Phœnicians." Here Sir George Lewis is all himself, dealing with the subjects which he liked best and dealing with them as he liked best. Anybody who wishes to know the sort of mind he had, may read—and it is not unamusing reading—his criticism on the Egyptian history of Baron Bunsen. At the risk of tediousness, we will condense a little of it.

"The principal manipulator" (says Sir George Lewis) "of the ancient Egyptian chronology is Baron Bunsen, who, in his recent work on Egypt, has avowedly applied the method of Niebuhr to Egyptian antiquity. Now, the method with which Niebuhr treated the early history of Rome was to reject the historical narrative handed down by ancient and generally received by modern writers, and to substitute for it a new narrative reconstructed on an arbitrary hypothetical basis of his own. Everything that is original and peculiar in Niebuhr's historical method, and in its results, is indeed unsound; but it possessed advantages when employed in the transmutation of Roman antiquity, which are wanting to it when applied to Egyptian antiquity. The early Roman history, whatever may be its authenticity, presents at least a full and continuous narrative, most parts of which are related in discordant versions by different classical writers. As none of these versions rests on an ascertained foundation or can be traced to coeval attestation, great facility is afforded for ingenious conjecture, for bold and startling combinations, for hypothetical reconstruction by means of specious analogies, and for the display of imposing paradox and dazzling erudition. But the so-called history of ancient Egypt consists of little more than chronology; it is for the most part merely a string of royal names. Now, this is a most unattractive field for

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which sustains the credit of the state and secures a *prestige* in the money market. It is scarcely possible to speak of him as finance minister without alluding to his differences with Mr. Gladstone in the Cabinet and out of it; yet it is not possible to discuss the subject accurately. Mr. Gladstone's views of the Budget of 1860 we all know; but Sir George Lewis's views have never been set forth at length, and it is not wise to base an argument on scraps of oral conversations. It may be as well, however, to point out that in addition to their intrinsic and considerable differences of temperament and character, they approached finance from two different and even opposite points of view. Mr. Gladstone is the successor, the legitimate inheritor of the policy, of Sir Robert Peel. He made his reputation as a financier and as a statesman by the Budget of 1853, in which the prominent object is to remove old taxes that cramp and harass industry; he regards the public purse as donative, out of which trade may be augmented and industry developed; Sir Robert Peel used the public purse in that manner, and Mr. Gladstone has done so also. Sir George Lewis was led, perhaps from temperament and certainly from circumstances, to take a stricter and simpler view of finance. He came into office on a sudden, during a great war, and he had to find the resources for that war; he had to consider not how taxation could be adjusted so as to help trade, but how the Exchequer could be filled to pay soldiers. On all financial matters he looked solely at the balance of the account: Will there be a deficit, or will there not be? Forms of account and all minor matters were in his mind of very small importance; he looked to the simple question, How much will there be in the till at the end of the year? With two such different prepossessions as these, it is no wonder that men so intrinsically different as Sir George Lewis and Mr. Gladstone did not very well agree upon finance; it is rather a wonder that they could act

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together at all. There is no use, over Sir George Lewis's grave, in reviving financial controversies; everybody will now admit that while he was in office and responsible, he was a sound and sure Chancellor of the Exchequer.

In the panic of 1857, we have heard, he was even amusing: his perfect impassivity and collectedness contrasted much with the excitement of eager men, and in a panic most men are eager. A deputation of Scotch bankers attended at the Treasury to ask Sir George to induce the Bank of England to make advances to them in certain possible cases: Sir George said, "Ah, gentlemen, if I were to interfere with the discretion of the Bank, there would be a run upon me much greater than any which there has ever been upon you." He was a man who probably *could* not lose his head.

At the Home Office he had the opportunity of displaying great judicial faculties. The Home Office is the high court of appeal in cases of criminal justice; when any one is to be hanged, it is almost always argued before the Home Secretary that he should not be hanged. If Sir George Lewis had practiced at the bar, for which he studied, he would have been a bad advocate: his mind was not fertile in ambiguous fallacies, and was incapable of artificial belief; and a great pleader should excel in these. One of the greatest judges of our generation, when at the bar, could only state the point once, and when the court did not understand him, could only mutter, "What fools they are! awful fools! infernal fools!" Sir George Lewis would not have indulged in these epithets, but he would have been nearly as little able to invent ingenious suggestions and out-of-the-way arguments; he probably would have said, "I have explained the matter: if the court *will* not comprehend it, *I* cannot make them." But no man was fitter for a judge than himself: he would never have shirked labor, — which is not unknown even among judges, —

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and his lucid exposition of substantial reasons would have been consulted by students for years. At the Home Office he could not display all these qualities, but he was able to display some of them.

At the War Office he shone far less. It did not suit his previous pursuits; and no other man with such pursuits would have taken it, or indeed would have been asked to take it. He pushed the notion too far in this case, that an able and educated man can master any subject and is fit for any office. The constitutional habit in England of making a civilian supreme over military matters, though we believe a most wise habit, has its objections and may easily look absurd; it *did* look rather absurd when the most pacific of the pacific, the most erudite of the erudite, Sir George Lewis, was placed at the head of the War Department. In great matters, it cannot be denied, he did well. When the capture of the "Trent" made a war with the Federal States a pressing probability, the arrangements were admitted to be admirable. Much of the credit must belong in such a case to military and other subordinates,—all the details must be managed by them; but the superior minister must have his credit too: he brought to a *focus* all which was done; he summed up the whole; he could say distinctly why everything which was done was done, and why everything left undone was left undone; he would have been ready with a plain, intelligible reason on all these matters in Parliament and elsewhere. And this was not an easy matter for a civilian after a few months of office. But on minor matters Sir George Lewis was not so good at the War Department as at the Exchequer or the Home Office. He had been apprenticed to the Home Office as Under-Secretary, and to the Exchequer as Financial Secretary to the Treasury, but he had never been apprenticed to the War Office: on matters of detail he was obliged to rely on others. He held, and justly, that a parliamentary chief, of temporary—

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perhaps *very* temporary — tenure of office, should be very cautious not to interfere too much with the minor business of his department; he should govern, but he should govern through others: but the due application of this maxim requires that the chief minister should know, as it were by intuition and instinct, which points are important and which are not important, and no civilian introduced at once to a new department like that of War can at once tell this, — he *must* be in the hands of others. In the House of Commons, too, Sir George Lewis could never answer questions of detail on war matters in an off-hand manner; he had to say, "I will inquire, and inform the honorable member:" at the Home Office he could have answered at once and of himself. It was an act of self-denial in him to go to the War Office, — he felt himself out of place there, and was sure that his administration of military matters would not add to his reputation; but he was told it was for the interest of the Government that he should accept the office, and he accepted it. Perhaps he was wrong, — the reputation of a first-rate public man is a great public power, and he should be careful not to diminish it: the weight of the greatest men is diminished by their being seen to do daily that which they do not do particularly well. A cold and cynical wisdom particularly disapproves of most men's *best* actions: few men were less exposed to the censure of such wisdom than Sir Geofge Lewis; but his acceptance of the War Office was a sacrifice of himself to the public, which injured him more than it advantaged the public, — which it would have been better not to have made.

The usefulness of men like Sir George Lewis is not to be measured by their usefulness in mere office; it is in the Cabinet that they are of *most* use. Sir George Lewis was made to discuss business with other men: "If," we have heard one who did much business with him say, "if there is any fault in

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what you say, he will find it out." In council, in the practical discussions of pending questions, a simple masculine intellect like that of Sir George Lewis finds its greatest pleasure and its best use: he was *made* to be a Cabinet minister.

The briefest notice of Sir George Lewis should not omit to mention one of his most agreeable and not one of his least rare peculiarities, — his good-natured use of great knowledge. It would have been easy for a man with such a memory as his, and such studious habits as his, to become most unpopular by cutting up the casual blunders of others; on the contrary, he was a most popular man, for he used his knowledge with a view to amend the ignorance of others, and not with a view to expose it. His conversation was superior either to his speeches or his writings: it had — what is perhaps rarer among parliamentary statesmen than among most people — the flavor of exact thought. It is hardly possible for men to pass their lives in oratorical efforts without losing some part of the taste for close-fitting words: well-sounding words which are not specially apt, which are not very precise, are as good or better for a popular assembly. Sir George Lewis's words in political conversation were as good as words could be; they might have gone to the press at once. We have compared it to hearing a chapter in Aristotle's "Politics," and perhaps that may give an idea that it was dull; but pointed thought on great matters is a very pleasant thing to hear, though after many ages and changes it is sometimes a hard thing to read. The conversation of the "Dialogue" at the end of his treatise on the "Best Form of Government" has been admired, but it is very inferior to the conversation of the writer; there was a delicate flavor of satire lurking in the precise thought which could not be written down, and which is now gone and irrecoverable.

"As often," says Lord Brougham, commenting on the death of a statesman once celebrated and now

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forgotten,*—"as . . . a subject presented itself so large and shapeless, and dry and thorny, that few men's fortitude could face and no one's patience could grapple with it; or an emergency occurred demanding on the sudden, access to stores of learning, the collection of many long years, but arranged so as to be made available to the most ignorant at the shortest notice,—it was then that men inquired where Laurence was." And now, not only when information is wanted, but when counsel is needed; when parties are confused; when few public men are trusted; when wisdom, always rare, is rarer even than usual,—many may ask, in no long time, "Where is Lewis now?"

*Dr. Laurence; see *ante*, page 256. The last sentence of this quotation is first in the original.—ED.

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THE TRIBUTE AT HEREFORD TO SIR G. C. LEWIS.

(1864.)

NOTHING could be in more perfect taste than the proceedings at Hereford on the uncovering of the statue of Sir George Lewis.* These local events are local casualties: it is impossible to foretell whether the principal local person is not a loquacious fool of good intentions, who will say just what he should not, or whether he is a man of feeling and judgment, who will say what he should say with taste and propriety.

There is nothing which Sir George Lewis would so much have disliked as an exaggerated *éloge* over his grave; those who knew him would have had his quiet smile of utter contempt present to them while they read it. Happily, nothing of this sort was attempted; the sober and modest nature of the man was duly honored in the quiet and unobtrusive nature of the remembrance.

Both Mr. Clive and Lord Palmerston spoke of Sir George Lewis with guarded care, as English gentlemen wish to be spoken of,—as one English gentleman, therefore, should speak of another. Sir George Lewis had no enemies; but if he had, no enemy could have taken a just exception to the praises of his friends. He would have exactly desired this. He cared very little, perhaps nothing, for passing popularity; he would have been prepared with various classical quotations upon the mutability of the vulgar judgment: but he would deeply value a restrained expression of deep respect by neighbors and friends

* Sept. 10, 1864.

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who knew him well; he would have believed that they were the legitimate "authority," the persons who ought to speak on that matter.

It is very curious that Lord Palmerston, who spoke (so to say) Sir George Lewis's epitaph, should have had the slowest, and that Sir George Lewis should have had the most rapid, political rise of our time. Unquestionably, Lord Palmerston is in some sense a buoyant man and Sir George Lewis was in some sense a heavy man; yet the latter came to the surface far quicker. Lord Palmerston was a quarter of a century in Parliament before he was anything at all, — before he was any more than a subaltern official; Sir George Lewis was only thirteen years in Parliament altogether, and in that time he was Secretary of the Treasury, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Home Secretary, Secretary for War, and had acquired the perfect respect and confidence of the House of Commons. He finished his whole career as a statesman in about half the number of years that it took Lord Palmerston to become a statesman at all.

The causes which so much delayed Lord Palmerston's rise are not to the present purpose, but the cause which so much accelerated that of Sir George Lewis is very simple: he had, above every other statesman of the age, the gift of inspiring confidence. Coleridge said of Southey that he inspired every one with a confidence in his reliability;* and this is an almost exact description of Sir George Lewis. Political opponents and political friends both felt that he had fairly applied a strong and unfettered mind to vast accumulated information, and that his measures were the result of that application. People thought twice before they opposed a grave and business-like measure, proposed by Sir George Lewis in that grave and business-like manner.

In one most important respect he was like Lord Palmerston, though in every other most unlike: his

* "Biographia Literaria," Chap. iii.

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opinions were always plain and simple opinions. People who went to him with the notion that he was a great philosopher and scholar were often puzzled at his plainness: they expected something far-fetched and recondite, and certainly they did not get it. He held as a principle that difficult schemes, fine calculations, unintelligible policies, were as such beyond the range of popular government; perhaps too he hated them as if they were a kind of mysticism. At all events, a person who could not understand Sir George Lewis's conversation on political business must have been unfit for every kind of business; it had exactly the homely exactitude that English people like. We have heard it remarked of Sir Robert Peel's speeches, that he generally made a remark which seemed to have been left by every one on purpose for him: it was so sensible when made that every one believed he could have made it. It was much the same with Sir George Lewis: what he said seemed so credible and sensible that in an hour or two you were apt to believe that you had always thought so.

Possibly this distinctness of aim has been rather deficient in our policy for a year past; we certainly believe that Sir George Lewis could have cross-examined Lord Russell on the Danish policy rather acutely. "What," he would have said, "is the object you desire? When we are agreed on that, we will discuss the *modus operandi;* but it is a mistake to deliberate on expedients when there is a fundamental discrepancy respecting ends." At any rate, we should like to hear Lord Russell answer Sir George Lewis on this subject. This need of a definite aim ran through all his speculations. To take an example from the foreign politics now most interesting to us, — American politics: —

"I have never," said Sir George Lewis in a letter of March, 1861, now lying before us, "been able, either in conversation or by reading, to obtain an answer to the question, What will the North do if they beat the South? To restore the old Union would be an

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absurdity: what other state of things does that village lawyer, Lincoln, contemplate as the fruit of victory? It seems to me that the men now in power at Washington are much such persons as in this country get possession of a disreputable joint-stock company: there is almost the same amount of ability and honesty."

After nearly three years of experience, it would be difficult to describe Washington more justly; but we do not cite the instance to prove Sir George Lewis's power of prediction, so much as to prove his unfailing desire for a distinct aim.

The political precision of Sir George Lewis is peculiarly English; but it is not at all more English than his scholarship. Persons who do not read such books may fancy that "scholars' books" are much the same in all countries; but such is not the case. Mr. Grote's history, to take an instance, could no more have been written in Germany than Bacon's "Novum Organum" could have been written by Socrates: that history belongs to the intellectual atmosphere of England as plainly as our parliamentary debates; there is in it the constant sense of evidence, the habitual perception of tested probability, which the atmosphere of a free country produces and must produce. Sir George Lewis's books have this instinctive sense of the real value of evidence even more than Mr. Grote's; he could not help feeling it; he did not wish to forget it, and he could not have forgotten it if he had wished.

Sir George Lewis is gone, but he has left a remembrance in many minds which will not grow cold while they are still warm. For many years it will to many be much to have known one who was learned and yet wise, just but yet kind; considerate and observing, and yet never in the least severe.

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ADAM SMITH AS A PERSON.

(1876.)

Of Adam Smith's political economy almost an infinite quantity has been said, but very little has been said as to Adam Smith himself; and yet not only was he one of the most curious of human beings, but his books can hardly be understood without having some notion of what manner of man he was. There certainly are economical treatises that go straight on, and that might have been written by a calculating machine; but the "Wealth of Nations" is not one of these, — any one who would explain what is in it and what is not in it must apply the "historical method," and state what was the experience of its author and how he worked up that experience. Perhaps, therefore, now that there is a sort of centenary of Adam Smith, it may not be amiss to give a slight sketch of him and of his life; and especially of the peculiar points in them that led him to write the book which still, in its effects even more than in its theory, occupies mankind.

The founder of the science of business was one of the most unbusinesslike of mankind: he was an awkward Scotch professor, apparently choked with books and absorbed in abstractions; he was never engaged in any sort of trade, and would probably never have made sixpence by any if he had been. His absence of mind was amazing. On one occasion, having to sign his name to an official document, he produced not his own signature, but an elaborate imitation of the signature of the person who signed before him; on another, a sentinel on duty having saluted him in military fashion, he astounded and

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offended the man by acknowledging it with a copy — a very clumsy copy, no doubt — of the same gestures. And Lord Brougham preserves other similar traditions. "It is related," he says, "by old people at Edinburgh, that while he moved through the Fishmarket in his accustomed attitude" (that is, "with his hands behind his back and his head in the air"), a female of the trade exclaimed, taking him for an idiot broken loose, 'Heigh, sir, to let the like of him be about! And yet he's weel eneugh put on' (dressed). It was often so too in society. Once during dinner at Dalkeith he broke out in a long lecture on some political matters of the day, and was bestowing a variety of severe epithets on a statesman, when he suddenly perceived" the nearest relative of the politician he was criticizing "sitting opposite, and stopped; but he was heard to go muttering, 'Deil care, Deil care, it's all true.'"* And these are only specimens of a crowd of anecdotes.

The wonder that such a man should have composed the "Wealth of Nations," which shows so profound a knowledge of the real occupations of mankind, is enhanced by the mode in which it was written. It was not the exclusive product of a life-long study, such as an absent man might, while in seeming abstraction, be really making of the affairs of the world; on the contrary, it was in the mind of its author only one of many books, or rather a single part of a great book, which he intended to write. A vast scheme floated before him, much like the dream of the late Mr. Buckle as to a "History of Civilization"; and he spent his life accordingly in studying the origin and progress of the sciences, the laws, the politics, and all the other aids and forces which have raised man from the savage to the civilized state. The plan of Adam Smith was indeed more comprehensive even than this: he wanted to trace not only the progress of the race, but also of

* "Men of Letters of George III.," Smith.

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the individual; he wanted to show how each man, being born (as he thought) with few faculties, came to attain to many and great faculties. He wanted to answer the question, How did man — race or individual — come to be what he is? These immense dreams are among the commonest phenomena of literary history; and as a rule, the vaster the intention the less the result, — the musings of the author are too miscellaneous, his studies too scattered, his attempts too incoherent, for him to think out anything valuable or to produce anything connected. But in Adam Smith's case the very contrary is true: he produced an enduring particular result in consequence of a comprehensive and diffused ambition; he discovered the laws of wealth in looking for "the natural progress of opulence,"* and he investigated the progress of opulence as part of the growth and progress of all things.

The best way to get a distinct notion of Adam Smith's scheme is to look at the other works which he published besides the "Wealth of Nations." The greatest, and the one which made his original reputation, was the "Theory of Moral Sentiments," in which he builds up the whole moral nature of man out of a single primitive emotion, sympathy, and in which he gives a history of ethical philosophy besides. With this are commonly bound up some "Considerations concerning the First Formation of Languages," which discuss how "Two savages who had never been taught to speak, but had been bred up remote from the societies of men, would naturally begin" their converse. Then there is a very curious "History of Astronomy," left imperfect; and another fragment on the "History of Ancient Physics," which is a kind of sequel to that part of the "History of Astronomy" which relates to the ancient astronomy; then a similar essay on "Ancient Logic and Metaphysics"; then another on the nature and development

* "Wealth of Nations," Book iii., Chap. i.

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of the Fine Arts — or as he calls them, "The Imitative Arts, Painting, Poetry and Music," in which was meant to have been included a history of the Theater, — all forming part, his executors tell us, "of a plan he had once formed for giving a connected history of the liberal and elegant arts." And he destroyed before his death the remains of the book "Lectures on Justice," in which, we are told by a student who heard them,* he followed Montesquieu in "endeavoring to trace the gradual progress of jurisprudence, both public and private, from the rudest to the most refined ages, and to point out the effects of those arts which contribute to subsistence and to the accumulation of property in producing correspondent improvements or alterations in law and government;" or as he himself announces it at the conclusion of the "Moral Sentiments," "another discourse" in which he designs to "endeavor to give an account of the general principles of law and government, and of the different revolutions they have undergone in the different ages and periods of society, not only in what concerns justice, but in what concerns police, revenue, and arms, and whatever else is the object of law." Scarcely any philosopher has imagined a vaster dream.

Undoubtedly it is a great literary marvel that so huge a scheme, on so many abstract subjects, should have produced anything valuable; and still more so that it should have produced what has been for a whole century a fundamental book on trade and money, — at first sight, the least fit for a secluded man to treat at all, and which, if he did treat of them, would seem more than any other to require from him an absorbed and exclusive attention. A little study of the life of Adam Smith, however, in some degree lessens the wonder; because it shows how in the course of his universal studies he came to meet with this particular train of thought, and how he came to be able to pursue it effectually.

* Prof. Millar, quoted by Dugald Stewart.

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Adam Smith was born early in the first half of the eighteenth century, at Kirkcaldy in Scotland, on June 5, 1723. His father died before he was born; but his mother, who is said to have been a woman of unusual energy and ability, lived to be very old, and to see her son at the height of his reputation as a philosopher. He was educated at school in the usual Scotch way, and at the University of Glasgow; and at both he is said, doubtless truly, to have shown an unusual facility of acquisition and an unusual interest in books and study. As we should also expect, a very strong memory, which he retained till the last, showed itself very early. Nothing, however, is known with precision as to the amount of knowledge he acquired in Scotland, nor as to his place among his contemporaries: the examination system, which nowadays in England discriminates both so accurately, has in Scotland never been equally developed, and in Adam Smith's time had never been heard of there at all.

His exceptional training begins at the next stage. There is at the University of Glasgow a certain endowment called the Snell Exhibition, after the name of its founder, which enables the students selected for it to study for some years at the University of Oxford. Of these exhibitioners Adam Smith became one, and as such studied at Oxford for as many as seven years. As might be expected, he gives the worst account of the state of the university at that time. In the sketch of the history of education which forms so odd an episode in the "Wealth of Nations," he shows perpetually that he thought the system which he had seen at Oxford exceedingly bad, and its government excessively corrupt.

"If," he says, "the authority to which" a teacher "is subject resides . . . in the body corporate" of the college or university "of which he is a member, . . . and in which the greater part of the other members are, like himself, persons who either are or ought to be teachers, they are likely to make a common cause, to be all very

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indulgent to one another, and every man to consent that his neighbor may neglect his duty provided he himself is allowed to neglect his own. In the University of Oxford the greater part of the public professors have for these many years given up altogether even the pretense of teaching."* And he adds: — "In England, the public schools are much less corrupted than the universities: in the schools the youth are taught, or at least may be taught, Greek and Latin, — that is, everything which the masters pretend to teach or which it is expected they should teach; in the universities the youth neither are taught, nor can always find any proper means of being taught, the sciences which it is the business of those incorporated bodies to teach."†

And he retained through life a fixed belief that endowments for education tended only to the "ease"‡ of the teacher, and not to the advantage of the learner. But though he says he had the means of learning little at Oxford, he certainly in fact learnt much. "Greek," as Sydney Smith says, "never crossed the Tweed in any force;" but Adam Smith incessantly shows a real familiarity with Greek books and a sound accumulation of Greek learning. Very likely his erudition would not bear much comparison with what is now carried away from Balliol; if we compare him with a more recent Snell exhibitioner, Sir William Hamilton, we shall see that Greek teaching has enormously advanced in the time between them: but on the other hand, if we compare Adam Smith with Scotch philosophers or§ purely Scotch education, say with Reid or Hume, we cannot help seeing that his acquaintance with Greek things belongs, both in quantity and in quality, to an order altogether superior to theirs.

For the vast works which Adam Smith contemplated, a sound knowledge of Greek was, as he must have felt, far more necessary than any other kind of knowledge, — the beginnings of nine-tenths of all

* Book v., Chap. i., Art. 2. This is a hash of two separate paragraphs, the first of which is made second in the extract. — ED.

† Ibid., a few paragraphs later. ‡ Book v., Chap. i., Part 3, Art. 2.

§ An obvious misprint for "of." — ED.

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philosophy are to be found there, and the rudiments of many other things; but for the purpose of the great task which he actually performed, Adam Smith learned at Oxford something much more valuable than Greek,—he acquired there a kind of knowledge and sympathy with England in which the other eminent Scotchmen—especially literary Scotchmen—of his time were often very deficient. At that time the recollection of the old rivalry between the two countries had by no means died away; there was still a separate Scotch philosophy and a separate literature; and when it happened, as it perpetually did, that Scotch writers were not thought so much of in England as they thought they ought to be, they were apt to impute their discredit to English prejudice, and to appeal to France and Paris to correct the error. Half Hume's mind, or more than half, was distorted by his hatred of England and his love of France; he often could not speak of English things with tolerable temper, and he always viewed French ones with extravagant admiration. Whether Adam Smith altogether liked this country may perhaps be doubted, Englishmen then hated Scotchmen so much: but he had no kind of antagonism to her, and quite understood that in most economical respects she was then exceedingly superior to France; and this exceptional sympathy and knowledge we may fairly ascribe to a long and pleasant residence in England. For his great work no qualification was more necessary: the "Wealth of Nations" would have been utterly spoiled if he had tried (as Hume incessantly would have tried) to show that in industrial respects, England might not be better than France, or at any rate was not so very much better.

The Snell foundation at Oxford has often been an avenue to the English Church, and it seems to have been intended that Adam Smith should use it as such. The only anecdote which remains of his college life may be a clue to his reasons for not doing so: he is

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said to have been found by his tutor in the act of reading Hume's "Philosophical Essays," then lately published, and to have been reproved for it; and it is certain that any one who at all sympathized with Hume's teaching in that book would have felt exceedingly little sympathy with the formularies of the Church of England, even as they were understood in the very Broad Church of that age. At any rate, for some reason or other, Adam Smith disappointed the wishes of his friends, gave up all idea of entering the Church of England, and returned to Scotland without fixed outlook or employment. He resided, we are told, two years with his mother, studying no doubt, but earning nothing, and visibly employed in nothing. In England such a career would probably have ended in his "writing for the booksellers," a fate of which he speaks in the "Wealth of Nations" with contempt;* but in Scotland there was a much better opening for philosophers,—the Scotch universities had then, as now, several professorships very fairly paid and very fairly distributed. The educated world in Scotland was probably stronger a century ago than it ever was before or since. The Union with England had removed the aristocracy of birth which overshadowed it before, and commerce had not yet created the aristocracy of wealth which overshadows it now. Philosophical merit had therefore then in Scotland an excellent chance of being far better rewarded than it usually is in the world: there were educated people who cared for philosophy, and these people had prizes to give away. One of those prizes Adam Smith soon obtained. He read lectures, we are told, under the patronage of Lord Kames, an eminent lawyer who wrote books on philosophy that are still quoted, and who was no doubt deeply interested in Adam Smith's plans of books on the origin and growth of all arts and sciences, as these were the topics which he himself studied and handled.

* Book i., Chap. x., Part 2.

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Contrary to what might have been expected, these lectures were very successful: though silent and awkward in social life, Adam Smith possessed in considerable perfection the peculiarly Scotch gift of abstract oratory. Even in common conversation, when once moved, he expounded his favorite ideas very admirably. As a teacher in public he did even better: he wrote almost nothing, and though at the beginning of a lecture he often hesitated, we are told, and seemed "not to be sufficiently possessed of the subject,"* yet in a minute or two he became fluent, and poured out an interesting series of animated arguments. Commonly, indeed, the silent man, whose brain is loaded with unexpressed ideas, is more likely to be a successful public speaker than the brilliant talker who daily exhausts himself in sharp sayings. Adam Smith acquired great reputation as a lecturer, and in consequence obtained two of the best prizes then given to philosophers in Scotland: first the professorship of Logic, and then that of Moral Philosophy, in the University of Glasgow.

The rules, or at any rate the practice, of the Scotch universities seem at that time to have allowed a professor in either of these chairs great latitude in the choice of his subject. Adam Smith during his first year lectured on rhetoric and *belles lettres* instead of on logic; and in the chair of Moral Philosophy he expounded, besides the theory of duty, a great scheme of social evolution. The beginnings of the "Wealth of Nations" made part of the course, but only as a fragment of the immense design of showing the origin and development of cultivation and law; or as we may perhaps put it, not inappropriately, of saying† how, from being a savage, man rose to be a Scotchman. This course of lectures seems to have been especially successful. So high, we are told, was "his reputation as a professor," that

* Prof. Millar, as before.

† An obvious misprint for "showing."—Ed

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"a multitude of students from a great distance resorted to the university merely upon his account. Those branches of science which he taught became fashionable" in the city, "and his opinions were the chief topics of discussion in clubs and literary societies. Even the small peculiarities in his pronunciation or manner of speaking became frequently the objects of imitation." This is the partial recollection of an attached pupil in distant years; it may be overcolored a little, but even after a fair abatement it is certainly the record of a great temporary triumph and local success.

That the greater part of the lectures can have been of much intrinsic merit, it is not easy now to believe. A historical "account of the general principles of law and government, and of the different revolutions they have undergone in the different ages and periods of society,"* would be too great a task for a great scholar of the ripest years and with all the accumulated materials of the present time; and it was altogether beyond the strength of a young man a century ago, not to say that he combined it with an account of the origin of the moral faculties, a theory of *belles lettres*, and other matters. The delivery of that part of the course which was concerned with wealth and revenue may have been useful to him, because it compelled him to bring his ideas on those subjects into a distinct form, — otherwise, being a bookish man, he might have been too absorbed in bookish matters, and neglected what can only be taught by life for that which is already to be learned from literature; but at the time this was only a minor merit, — the main design of the lectures was only an impossible aim at an unbounded task.

So complex, however, is life, that this Scotch professorship, though in a superficial view wasteful, and likely to exhaust and hurt his mind by demanding

* Last paragraph of "Theory of Moral Sentiments."

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the constant efflux of inferior matter, was nevertheless on the whole exceedingly useful. It not only induced him to study as a part of his vast scheme the particular phenomena of wealth, but it gave him an excellent opportunity of seeing those phenomena and of learning how to explain them. It was situated at Glasgow; and Glasgow, though a petty place in comparison with its present magnitude, was nevertheless a considerable mercantile place according to the notions of those times. The Union with England had opened to it the trade with our West-Indian colonies, as well as with the rest of the English empire, and it had in consequence grown rapidly and made large profits. That its size was small, as we should think now, was to a learner rather an aid than a disadvantage: a small commerce is more easily seen than an immense one,—that of Liverpool or London now is so vast that it terrifies more than excites the imagination; and a small commerce, if varied, has almost as much to teach as a large one,—the elements are the same though the figures are smaller, and the less the figures the easier are they to combine. An inspection of Liverpool now would not teach much more than an inspection of Glasgow a hundred years ago, and the lessons of modern Liverpool would be much more difficult to learn. But the mere sight of the phenomena of Glasgow commerce was but a small part of the advantage to Adam Smith of a residence at Glasgow. The most characteristic and most valuable tenets of Adam Smith are, when examined, by no means of a very abstract and recondite sort. We are indeed in this generation not fully able to appreciate the difficulty of arriving at them: we have been bred up upon them; our disposition is more to wonder how any one could help seeing them than to appreciate the effort of discovering them. Experience shows that many of them, the doctrine of Free Trade for example, are very uncongenial to the untaught human mind. On political economy the English-speaking

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race is undoubtedly the best instructed part of mankind; and nevertheless, in the United States and in every English-speaking colony, Protection is the firm creed of the ruling classes, and Free Trade is but a heresy. We must not fancy that any of the main doctrines of Adam Smith were very easily arrived at by him because they seem very obvious to us. But on the other hand, although such doctrines as his are too opposed to many interests and to many first impressions to establish themselves easily as a dominant creed, they are quite within the reach and quite congenial to the taste of an intelligent dissenting minority. There was a whole race of mercantile Free-Traders long before Adam Smith was born; in his time the doctrine was in the air. It was not accepted or established; on the contrary, it was a tenet against which a respectable parent would probably caution his son: still it was known as a tempting heresy, and one against which a warning was needed. In Glasgow there were doubtless many heretics. Probably in consequence of the firm belief in a rigid theology, and of the incessant discussion of its technical tenets, there has long been and there is still, in the South of Scotland, a strong tendency to abstract argument quite unknown in England. Englishmen have been sometimes laughing at it and sometimes gravely criticizing it for several generations: Mr. Buckle wrote half a volume on it; Sydney Smith alleged that he heard a Scotch girl answer in a quadrille, "What you say, my lord, is very true of love in the *aibs*tract, but—"* and so on. Yet in spite both of ridicule and argument, the passion for doctrine is still strong in Southern Scotland, and it will take many years more to root it out. At Glasgow in Adam Smith's time it had no doubt very great influence: a certain number of hard-headed merchants were believers in Free Trade and kindred tenets. One of these is still by chance known to us: Dr. Carlyle,

*Lady Holland's "Memoir," Chap. i.

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whom Mr. Gladstone not unhappily described as a "gentleman clergyman" of the Church of Scotland, tells us of a certain Provost Cochrane, to whom Adam Smith always "acknowledged his obligations," and who was "the founder and a leading member" of a club "in which their express design was to inquire into the nature and principles of trade in all its branches, and to communicate their knowledge and views on that subject to each other."* From this club Adam Smith not only learned much which he would never have found in any book, but also in part perhaps acquired the influential and (so to say) practical way of explaining things which so much distinguishes the "Wealth of Nations." Mr. Mill says he learned from his intercourse with East India directors the habit of looking for, and the art of discovering, "the mode of putting a thought which gives it easiest admittance into minds not prepared for it by habit;"† and Adam Smith probably gained something of this sort by living with the Glasgow merchants, for no other book written by a learned professor shows anything like the same power of expressing and illustrating arguments in a way likely to influence minds like theirs. And it is mainly by his systematic cultivation of this border-land between theory and practice that Adam Smith attained his pre-eminent place and influence.

But this usefulness of his Scotch professorship was only in the distant future; it was something for posterity to detect, but it could not have been known at the time. The only pages of his professorial work which Adam Smith then gave to the public were his lectures on Moral Philosophy, in what an Englishman would consider its more legitimate sense. These formed the once celebrated "Theory of Moral Sentiments," which, though we should now think

* Alexander Carlyle's Autobiography, Chap. iii. A note refers readers to Dr. Strang's "Glasgow and Its Clubs" and the "Cochrane Correspondence" for information regarding Andrew Cochrane and others. — Ed.

† J. S. Mill's Autobiography, Chap. iii.

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them rather pompous, were then much praised and much read; for a great part, indeed, of Adam Smith's life they constituted his main title to reputation. The "Wealth of Nations" was not published till seventeen years later; he wrote nothing else of any importance in the interval: and it is now curious to find that when the "Wealth of Nations" was published, many good judges thought it not so good as the "Theory of Moral Sentiments," and that the author himself was by no means certain that they were not right.

The "Theory of Moral Sentiments" was indeed for many years exceedingly praised. One sect of philosophers praised it, as it seems to me, because they were glad of a celebrated ally, and another because they were glad of a celebrated opponent: the first said, "See that so great an authority as Adam Smith concurs with us;" and the second replied, "But see how very weak his arguments are: if so able an arguer as Adam Smith can say so little for your doctrines, how destitute of argumentative grounds those doctrines must be!" Several works in the history of philosophy have had a similar fate. But a mere student of philosophy, who cares for no sect and wants only to know the truth, will nowadays, I think, find little to interest him in this celebrated book. In Adam Smith's mind, as I have said before, it was part of a whole: he wanted to begin with the origin of the faculties of each man and then build up that man, just as he wished to arrive at the origin of human society and then build up society. His "Theory of Moral Sentiments" builds them all out of one source, sympathy, and in this way he has obtained praise from friends and enemies: his friends are the school of "moral-sense" thinkers, because he is on their side, and believes in a special moral faculty, which he laboriously constructs from sympathy; his enemies are the Utilitarian school, who believe in no such special faculty, and who set themselves to show that his labor has been in vain and

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that no such faculty has been so built up. One party says the book is good to gain authority for the conclusion, and the other that you may gain credit by refuting its arguments. For unquestionably its arguments *are* very weak, and attractive to refutation; if the intuitive school had had no better grounds than these, the Utilitarians would have vanquished them ages since. There is a fundamental difficulty in founding morals on sympathy, an obvious confusion of two familiar sentiments: we often sympathize where we cannot approve, and approve where we cannot sympathize. The special vice of party spirit is, that it effaces the distinction between the two: we sympathize with our party till we approve its actions. There is a story of a Radical wit in the last century who was standing for Parliament, and his opponent (of course a Tory) objected that he was always *against* the king whether right or wrong; upon which the wit retorted that on his own showing the Tory was exposed to equal objection, since he was always *for* the king whether right or wrong. And so it will always be: even the wisest party men more or less sympathize with the errors of their own side,—they would be powerless if they did not do so, they would gain no influence if they were not of like passions with those near them. Adam Smith could not help being aware of this obvious objection,—he was far too able a reasoner to elaborate a theory without foreseeing what would be said against it; but the way in which he tries to meet the objection only shows that the objection is invincible. He sets up a supplementary theory—a little epicycle—that the sympathy which is to test good morals must be the sympathy of an "impartial spectator"; but then who is to watch the watchman? who is to say when the spectator is impartial and when he is not? If he sympathizes with one side, the other will always say that he is partial. As a moralist, the supposed

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spectator must warmly approve good actions and warmly disapprove bad actions; as an impartial person, he must never do either the one or the other. He is a fiction of inconsistent halves: if he sympathizes he is not impartial, and if he is impartial he does not sympathize. The radical vice of the theory is shown by its requiring this accessory invention of a being both hot and cold, because the essence of the theory is to identify the passion which loves with the sentiment which approves.

But although we may now believe the "Theory of Moral Sentiments" to be of inconsiderable philosophical value, and though it would at first sight seem very little likely to contribute to the production of the "Wealth of Nations," yet it was in fact in a curious way most useful to it. The education of young noblemen has always been a difficulty in the world, and many schemes have been invented to meet it. In Scotland, a hundred years ago, the most fashionable way was to send them to travel in Europe, and to send with them some scholar of repute to look after their morals and to superintend their general education. The guardians of the great border nobleman, the Duke of Buccleuch, were in want of such a tutor to take him such a tour, and it seems to have struck them that Adam Smith was the very person adapted for the purpose. To all appearance an odder selection could hardly have been made: Adam Smith was, as we have seen, the most absent of men, and an awkward Scotch professor, and he was utterly unacquainted with the Continent; he had never crossed the English Channel in his life, and if he had been left to himself would probably never have done so. But one of the guardians was Charles Townshend, who had married the young Duke's mother; he was not much unlike Mr. Disraeli in character, and had great influence at that time. He read the "Theory of Moral Sentiments," and Hume writes to Adam Smith:—

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"Charles Townshend, who passes for the cleverest fellow in England, is so taken with the performance that he said to Oswald he would put the Duke of Buccleuch under the author's care, and would make it worth his while to accept of that charge. As soon as I heard this, I called on him twice with a view of talking with him about the matter, and of convincing him of the propriety of sending that young nobleman to Glasgow; for I could not hope that he could offer you any terms which would tempt you to renounce your professorship: but I missed him. Mr. Townshend passes for being a little uncertain in his resolutions, so perhaps you need not build much on this sally."*

Mr. Townshend was, however, this time in earnest, and the offer was made to Adam Smith. In our time there would have been an insuperable difficulty: he was a professor of great repute, they were asking him to give up a life professorship that yielded a considerable income, and they would have hardly been able to offer him anything equally permanent. But in the eighteenth century there was a way of facilitating such arrangements that we do not now possess. The family of Buccleuch had great political influence, and Charles Townshend, the Duke's stepfather, at times possessed more; and accordingly the guardians of the young Duke agreed that they should pay Adam Smith £300 a year till they should get him an equal office of profit under the Crown. A person apparently more unfit for the public service could not easily have been found, but in that age of sinecures and pensions it was probably never expected that he should perform any service: an arrangement more characteristic of the old world, and more unlike our present world, could hardly have been made. The friends of the young Duke might not unnaturally have had some fears about it; but in fact, for his interests, it turned out very well. Long afterwards, when Adam Smith was dead, the Duke wrote:—

"In October, 1766, we returned to London, after having spent near three years together without the slightest disagreement or

*Letter of April 12, 1759; quoted in Dugald Stewart's "Life."

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coolness; on my part with every advantage that could be expected from the society of such a man. We continued to live in friendship till the hour of his death; and I shall always remain with the impression of having lost a friend whom I loved and respected, not only for his great talents but for every private virtue." *

Very few of Charles Townshend's caprices were as successful. Through life there was about Adam Smith a sort of lumbering *bonhomie* which amused and endeared him to those around him.

To Adam Smith the result was even better. If it had not been for this odd consequence of the "Theory of Moral Sentiments," he might have passed all his life in Scotland, delivering similar lectures and clothing very questionable theories in rather pompous words. He said in after life that there was no better way of compelling a man to master a science than by setting him to teach it, and this may be true of the definite sciences; but nothing can be conceived worse for a man of inventive originality than to set him to roam over huge subjects like law, morals, politics, and civilization, particularly at a time when few good data for sound theories on such subjects are at hand for him to use. In such a position, the cleverer the man the worse are likely to be the consequences: the wider his curiosity and the more fertile his mind, the surer he is to pour out a series of gigantic conjectures of little use to himself or to any one. A one-eyed man with a taste for one subject, even at this disadvantage, may produce something good,—the limitation of his mind may save him from being destroyed by his position; but a man of large interests will fail utterly. As Adam Smith had peculiarly wide interests, and as he was the very reverse of a one-eyed man, he was in special danger, and the mere removal from his professorship was to him a gain of the first magnitude; it was of cardinal importance to him to be delivered from the production of incessant words, and to be brought

* Letter to Stewart.

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into contact with facts and the world. And as it turned out, the caprice of Charles Townshend had a singular further felicity: it not only brought him into contact with facts and the world, but with the most suitable sort of facts, and for his purpose the best part of the world.

The greater part of his three years abroad was naturally spent in France: France was then by far the greatest country on the Continent; Germany was divided and had not yet risen, Spain had fallen, Italy was of little account. In one respect, indeed, France was relatively greater than even at the time of her greatest elevation, the time of the first Napoleon. The political power of the first empire was almost unbounded, but it had no intellectual power; under it Paris had ceased to be an important focus of thought and literature, — the vehement rule which created the soldiers also stamped out the ideas. But under the mild government of the old *régime*, Paris was the principal center of European authorship; the deficiency of the old *régime* in eminent soldiers and statesmen only added to the eminence of its literary men. Paris was then queen of two worlds: of that of politics by a tradition from the past, and of literature by a force and life vigorously evidenced in the present. France therefore thus attracted the main attention of all travelers who cared for the existing life of the time: Adam Smith and his pupil spent the greater part of their stay abroad there; and as a preparation for writing the "Wealth of Nations" he could nowhere else have been placed so well. Macaulay says that "ancient abuses and new theories"* flourished together in France just before the meeting of the States-General in greater vigor than they had been seen to be combined before or since, and the description is quite as true economically as politically: on all economical matters the France of that time was a sort of museum stocked with the most important errors.

* Essay on Barère.

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By nature then as now, France was fitted to be a great agricultural country, a great producer and exporter of corn and wine; but her legislators for several generations had endeavored to counteract the aim of nature, and had tried to make her a manufacturing country and an exporter of her manufactures. Like most persons in those times, they had been prodigiously impressed by the high position which "the maritime powers," as they were then called (the comparatively little powers of England and Holland), were able to take in the politics of Europe. They saw that this influence came from wealth, that this wealth was made in trade and manufacture; and therefore they determined that France should not be behindhand, but should have as much trade and manufacture as possible. Accordingly, they imposed prohibitive or deterring duties on the importation of foreign manufactures, they gave bounties to the corresponding home manufactures; they tried, in opposition to the home-keeping bent of the French character, to found colonies abroad. These colonies were, according to the maxim then everywhere received, to be markets for the trade and nurseries for the commerce of the mother country; they were mostly forbidden to manufacture for themselves, and were compelled to import all the manufactures and luxuries they required from Europe, exclusively in French ships. Meanwhile at home agriculture was neglected. There was not even a free passage for goods from one part of the country to another. As Adam Smith himself describes it:—

"In France, the different revenue laws which take place in the different provinces require a multitude of revenue officers to surround not only the frontiers of the kingdom, but those of almost each particular province, in order either to prevent the importation of certain goods or to subject it to the payment of certain duties, to the no small interruption of the interior commerce of the country. Some provinces are allowed to compound for the *gabelle* or salt tax; others are exempted from it altogether. Some

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provinces are exempted from the exclusive sale of tobacco, which the farmers-general enjoy through the greater part of the kingdom. The *aides*, which correspond to the excise in England, are very different in different provinces: some provinces are exempted from them, and pay a composition or equivalent; in those in which they take place and are in farm, there are many local duties which do not extend beyond a particular town or district. The *traites*, which correspond to our customs, divide the kingdom into three parts: first, the provinces subject to the tariff of 1664, which are called the 'provinces of the five great farms,' and under which are comprehended Picardy, Normandy, and the greater part of the interior provinces of the kingdom; secondly, the provinces subject to the tariff of 1667, which are called the 'provinces reckoned foreign,' and under which are comprehended the greater part of the frontier provinces; and thirdly, those provinces which are said to be 'treated as foreign,' or which, because they are allowed a free commerce with foreign countries, are in their commerce with the other provinces of France subjected to the same duties as other foreign countries, — these are Alsace, the three bishoprics of Metz, Toul, and Verdun, and the three cities of Dunkirk, Bayonne, and Marseilles. Both in the provinces of the five great farms (called so on account of an ancient division of the duties of customs into five great branches, each of which was originally the subject of a particular farm, though they are now all united in one), and in those which are said to be 'reckoned foreign,' there are many local duties which do not extend beyond a particular town or district. There are some such even in the provinces which are said to be 'treated as foreign,' particularly in the city of Marseilles. It is unnecessary to observe how much both the restraints upon the interior commerce of the country and the number of the revenue officers must be multiplied, in order to guard the frontiers of those different provinces and districts which are subject to such different systems of taxation."*

And there were numerous attendant errors, such as generally accompany a great Protective legislation, but which need not be specified in detail.

In consequence, the people were exceedingly miserable. The system of taxation was often enough by itself to cause great misery. "In the countries," says Adam Smith, "where the personal *taille* takes place, the farmer . . . is . . . afraid to have a good

* Book v., Chap. ii., Art. 4.

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team of horses or oxen, but endeavors to cultivate with the meanest and most wretched instruments of husbandry that he can."* The numerous imposts on the land due from the peasantry to the nobles had the same effect even then,—most of the country was practically held in a kind of double ownership; the peasant cultivator had usually, by habit if not by law, a fixed hold upon the soil, but he was subject in the cultivation of it to innumerable exactions of varying kinds, which the lord could change pretty much as he chose. "In France," continues Adam Smith, so oddly contrary to everything which we should say now, " . . . the inferior ranks of people must . . . suffer patiently the usage which their superiors think proper to give them."† The country in Europe where there is now perhaps the most of social equality was then the one in which there was perhaps the least.

And side by side with this museum of economical errors there was a most vigorous political economy which exposed them. The doctrines of Free Trade had been before several times suggested by isolated thinkers, but by far the most powerful combined school of philosophers who incessantly inculcated them were the French *économistes*. They delighted in proving that the whole structure of the French laws upon industry was utterly wrong: that prohibitions ought not to be imposed on the import of foreign manufactures, that bounties ought not to be given to native ones; that the exportation of corn ought to be free; that the whole country ought to be a fiscal unit; that there should be no duty between any province: and so on in other cases. No one could state the abstract doctrines on which they rested everything more clearly. "Acheter, c'est vendre," said Quesnay, the founder of the school; "vendre, c'est acheter:"‡ you cannot better express the doctrine of modern political

* Book v., Chap. ii., Art. 2. † Book v., Chap. ii., Art. 4.

‡ "To buy is to sell, to sell is to buy." Inaccurately quoted: Quesnay's words are ("Dialogue sur le Commerce"), "Tout achat est vente, et . . . toute vente est achat" (All purchase is sale, and all sale is purchase). — Ed.

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economy that "trade is barter." "Do not attempt," Quesnay continues, "to fix the price of your products, goods, or services: they will escape your rules. Competition alone can regulate prices with equity; it alone restricts them to a moderation which varies little; it alone attracts with certainty provisions where they are wanted or labor where it is required."* "That which we call dearness is the only remedy of dearness; dearness causes plenty."† Any quantity of sensible remarks to this effect might be disinterred from these writers.

They were not always equally wise. As the prime maxim of the ruling policy was to encourage commerce and neglect agriculture, this sect set up a doctrine that agriculture was the only source of wealth, and that trade and commerce contributed nothing to it. The labor of artificers and merchants was sterile; that of agriculturists was alone truly productive. The way in which they arrived at this strange idea was, if I understand it, something like this: they took the whole agricultural produce of a country, worth say £5,000,000 as it stood in the hands of the farmer, and applied it thus:—

First, as we should say, in repayment of capital spent in wages, etc., ...	£3,000,000
Secondly, in payment of profit by way of hire of capital, say, or as subsistence to himself, . .	500,000
Total outlay, ...	£3,500,000

But that outlay of £3,500,000 has produced a value of £5,000,000: there is therefore an overplus, over and above the outlay, of £1,500,000; and this overplus, or *produit net* as the *économistes* call it, goes to the landlord for rent, as we should call it. But no other employment yields any similar *produit net*. A cotton spinner only replaces his own capital, and obtains his

* I find no such or similar passage in Quesnay. — Ed.

† This *idea* is frequent in Quesnay; I find no such words. — Ed.

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profit on it; like the farmer (as they said), he pays the outlay, and he gains a profit or subsistence for himself: but he does no more. There is no extra overplus [as] in farming; no balance, after paying wages and hiring capital; nothing to go to any landlord. In the same way, commerce is, according to this system, transfer only: the expense of distribution is paid, the necessary number of capitalists and of laborers are maintained, but that is all; there is nothing beyond the wages and beyond the profit. In agriculture only is there a third element, a *produit net.*

From this doctrine the *économistes* drew two inferences: one very agreeable to agriculturists, the other very disagreeable, but both exactly opposite to the practice of their government. *First*, they said, as agriculture was the exclusive source of all wealth, it was absurd to depress it or neglect it, or to encourage commerce and manufacture in place of it. They had no toleration for the system of finance and commercial legislation which they saw around them, of which the one object was to make France a trading and manufacturing country, when nature meant it to be an agricultural one. *Secondly*, they inferred that most if not all the existing taxes in France were wrong in principle. "If," they argued, "agriculture is the only source of wealth, and if, as we know, wealth only can pay taxes, then all taxes should be imposed on agriculture." They reasoned: — "In manufactures there is only a necessary hire of labor and a similar hire of capital, at a cost which cannot be diminished; there is in them no available surplus for taxation. If you attempt to impose taxes on them, and if in name you make them pay such taxes, they will charge higher for their necessary work,—they will in a roundabout way throw the burden of those taxes on agriculture. The *produit net* of the latter is the one real purse of the state; no other pursuit can truly pay anything, for it has no purse." And

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therefore, they summed up, all taxes, save a single one on the *produit net*, were absurd, — they only attempted to make those pay who could not pay, to extract money from fancied funds in which there was no money; all the then existing taxes in France, therefore, they proposed to abolish, and to replace them by a single tax on agriculture only.

As this system was so opposed to the practice of the government, one would have expected that it should have been discountenanced, if not persecuted, by the government; but in fact it was rather favored by it. Quesnay, the founder of the system, had a place at court, and was under the special protection of the King's mistress,* who was then the King's government. M. de Lavergne has quoted a graphic description of him: —

"'Quesnay,' writes Marmontel, 'well lodged in a small *appartement* in the *entresol* of Madame de Pompadour, only occupied himself from morning till night with political and agricultural economy. He believed that he had reduced the system to calculation, and to axioms of irresistible evidence; and as he was collecting a school, he gave himself the trouble to explain to me his new doctrine, in order to make me one of his proselytes. I . . . applied all my force of comprehension to understand those truths which he told me were self-evident; but I found in them only vagueness and obscurity. To make him believe that I understood that which I really did not understand was beyond my power; but I listened with patient docility, and left him the hope that in the end he would enlighten me and make me believe his doctrine. I did more: I applauded his work, which I really thought very useful, — for he tried to recommend agriculture in a country where it was too much disdained, and to turn many excellent understandings towards the study of it. . . . While political storms were forming and dissolving above the *entresol* of Quesnay, he perfected his calculations and his axioms of rural economy, as tranquil and as indifferent to the movements of the court as if he had been a hundred leagues off. Below, in the *salon* of Madame de Pompadour, they deliberated on peace or war, on the choice of generals, on the recall of ministers; while we in the *entresol* were reasoning on agriculture, calculating the *produit net*, or sometimes were dining gayly with Diderot, D'Alembert, Duclos, Helvetius, Turgot, Buffon; and Madame de Pompadour, not

*He was her (Mme. de Pompadour's) physician. — ED.

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being able to induce this troop of philosophers to come down to her *salon*, came herself to see them at table and to chat with them.'"*

An opposition philosophy has rarely been so petted and well treated. Much as the reign of Louis XVI. differed in most respects from that of Louis XV., it was like it in this patronage of the *économistes:* Turgot was made Minister of Finance, to reform France by applying their doctrines.

The reason of this favor to the *économistes* from the government was, that on the question in which the government took far the most interest the *économistes* were on its side. The daily want of the French government was more power, — though nominally a despotism, it was feeble in reality: but the *économistes* were above all things anxious for a very strong government; they held to the maxim, Everything *for* the people, nothing *by* them; they had a horror of checks and counterpoises and resistances; they wished to do everything by the *fiat* of the sovereign. They had in fact the natural wish of eager speculators, to have an irresistible despotism behind them and supporting them; and with the simplicity which marks so much of the political speculation of the eighteenth century, but which now seems so childlike, they never seemed to think how they were to get their despot, or how they were to insure that he should be on their side. The painful experience of a hundred years has taught us that influential despotisms are not easy to make, and that good ones are still less so; but in their own time nothing could be more advantageous to the *économistes* than to have an eager zeal for a perfect despotism; in consequence they were patronized by the greatest existing authority, instead of being discountenanced by it.

* Lavergne, "Les Économistes Français du Dix-huitième Siècle," article "Quesnay," quoting from Marmontel's "Memoirs," Book v. "Well lodged in a small *appartement*," however, is an ingeniously perverse mistranslation of "logé bien à l'étroit" (lodged in very close quarters); and "political" before "storms" is an interpolation of Bagehot's. — Ed.

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This account of the *économistes* may seem, to a reader who looks at Adam Smith exclusively by the light of modern political economy, to be too long for their relation to him; but he would not have thought so himself. He so well knew how much his mind had been affected by them and by their teaching, that he at one time thought of dedicating the "Wealth of Nations" to Quesnay, their founder;* and though he relinquished that intention, he always speaks of him with the gravest respect. If indeed we consider what Glasgow is now, still more what it must have been a hundred years ago, we shall comprehend the degree to which this French experience — this sight of a country so managed, and with such a political economy — must have excited the mind of Adam Smith; it was the passage from a world where there was no *spectacle* to one in which there was the best which the world has ever seen, and simultaneously the passage from the most Scotch of ideas to others the most un-Scotch. A feeble head would have been upset in the transit; but Adam Smith kept his.

From France he went home to Scotland, and stayed quietly with his mother at his native town of Kirkcaldy for a whole ten years. He lived on the annuity from the Duke of Buccleuch, and occupied himself in study only. What he was studying, if we considered the "Wealth of Nations" as a book of political economy only, we might be somewhat puzzled to say; but the contents of that book are, as has been said, most miscellaneous, and in its author's mind it was but a fragment of an immensely larger whole. Much more than ten years' study would have been necessary for the entire book which he contemplated.

At last, in 1776, the "Wealth of Nations" was published, and was on the whole well received. Dr. Carlyle indeed preserves an impression that in point of style it was inferior to the "Theory of Moral

* Stewart.

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Sentiments";* but all competent readers were agreed as to the great value of the substance, and almost everybody will probably now think, in spite of Dr. Carlyle, that the style is very much better than that of the "Moral Sentiments." There is about the latter a certain showiness and an "air of the professor trying to be fascinating," which are not very agreeable; and after all there is a ponderous weight in the words which seems to bear down the rather flimsy matter. But the style of the "Wealth of Nations" is entirely plain and manly: the author had in the interval seen at least a little of the living world and of society, and had learnt that the greatest mistake is the trying to be more agreeable than you can be, and that the surest way to spoil an important book is to try to attract the attention of, to "write down" to, a class of readers too low to take a serious interest in the subject. A really great style, indeed, Adam Smith's certainly is not. Lord Mansfield is said to have told Boswell that he did not feel, in reading either Hume or Adam Smith, that he was reading English at all; and it was very natural that it should be so, — English was not the mother tongue of either. Adam Smith had no doubt spoken somewhat broad Scotch for the first fourteen or fifteen years of his life; probably he never spoke anything that could quite be called "English" till he went to Oxford: and nothing so much hampers the free use of the pen in any language as the incessant remembrance of a kindred but different one, — you are never sure [whether] the idioms nature prompts are those of the tongue you would speak or of the tongue you would reject. Hume and Adam Smith exemplify the difficulty in opposite ways. Hume is always idiomatic, but his idioms are constantly wrong; many of his best passages are, on that account, curiously

* "Tedious and full of repetition. . . . His separate essays in the second volume . . . without much force or determination." "Autobiography," Chap. vii.

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grating and puzzling: you feel that they are very like what an Englishman would say, but yet that after all, somehow or other, they are what he never would say,—there is a minute seasoning of imperceptible difference, which distracts your attention and which you are forever stopping to analyze. Adam Smith's habit was very different. His style is not colloquial in the least: he adheres to the heavy "book" English which he had found in the works of others, and was sure that he could repeat in his own; and in that sort of style he has eminent merit. No one ever has to read him twice to gather his meaning; no one can bring much valid objection to his way of expressing that meaning; there is even a sort of appropriateness, though often a clumsy sort, in his way of saying it. But the style has no intrinsic happiness; no one would read it for its own sake; the words do not cleave to the meaning, so that you cannot think of them without it or of it without them. This is only given to those who write in the speech of their childhood, and only to the very few of those—the five or six in every generation—who have from nature the best grace, who think by inborn feeling in words at once charming and accurate.

Of the "Wealth of Nations" as an economical treatise, I have nothing to say now; but it is not useless to say that it is a very amusing book about old times. As it is dropping out of immediate use from change of times, it is well to observe that this very change brings it a new sort of interest of its own. There are few books from which there may be gathered more curious particulars of the old world. I cull at random, almost, that "a broad-wheel wagon, attended by two men and drawn by eight horses," then "in about six weeks' time carried and brought" trade "between London and Edinburgh;"* that in Adam Smith's opinion, if there were such an effectual demand for grain as would require a million tons of

*Book i., Chap. iii.

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shipping to import it, the "navy of England"—the mercantile navy, of course—"would not be sufficient" for it:* that Holland was "the great emporium for all European goods;"† that she was, "in proportion to the extent of the land and the number of its inhabitants, by far the richest country in Europe;"‡ that she had "the greatest share of the carrying trade;"§ that her citizens possessed £40,000,000 in the French and English funds:‖ that "in Sheffield no master cutler can have more than one apprentice at a time, by a by-law of the corporation," and "in Norfolk and Norwich no master weaver . . . more than two;"¶ that if Adam Smith's eyes served him right, "the common people in Scotland, who are fed with oatmeal, are in general neither so strong nor so handsome as the same rank of people in England, who are fed with wheaten bread," and that "they neither work so well nor look so well;"** that—and this is odder still—"the chairmen, porters, and coal-heavers in London, and those unfortunate women who live by prostitution,—the strongest men and the most beautiful women, perhaps, in the British dominions,—are . . . from the lowest rank of people in Ireland, who are generally fed with" the potato;†† that £1,000 share in India stock gave "a share, though not in the plunder, yet in the appointment of the plunderers of India;"‡‡ that "the expense of the civil establishment of Massachusetts Bay, before the commencement of the present disturbances" (that is, the American war), "used to be but about £18,000 a year," and "that of New York £4,500;"§§ that all the civil establishments in America did not at the same date cost £67,000 a year;‖‖ that in consequence

* Book iv., Chap. i.
† Book iv., Chap. ii.
‡ Book ii., Chap. v., near the end.
§ Ibid.
‖ In the English funds *alone;* Smith gives it as an *on dit*, but says he thinks it exaggerated (Book i., Chap. ix.).—Ed.
¶ Book i., Chap. x., Part 2.
** Book i., Chap. xi., Part 1.
†† Ibid.
‡‡ Book v., Chap. i., Part 1, Art. 1.
§§ Book i., Chap. vii., Part 2
‖‖ £64,700 exclusive of Maryland and North Carolina (ibid.).

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of the monopoly of the American colonial market, the commerce of England, "instead of running in a great number of small channels, has been taught to run principally in one great channel:"* that "the territorial acquisitions of the East India Company, the undoubted right of the Crown, . . . might be rendered another source of revenue more abundant, perhaps, than all" others from which much addition could be expected;† that "Great Britain is perhaps, since the world began, the only state which . . . has extended its empire . . . without once augmenting its resources;"‡ that (and this is the final sentence of the book) "If any of the provinces of the British empire cannot be made to contribute towards the support of the whole empire, it is surely time that Great Britain should free herself from the expense of defending those provinces in time of war, and of supporting any part of their civil or military establishments in time of peace, and endeavor to accommodate her future views and designs to the real mediocrity of her circumstances,"—a strange passage, considering all that has happened since and all the provinces which we have since taken. No one can justly estimate the "Wealth of Nations" who thinks of it as a book of mere political economy, such as Quesnay had then written or as Ricardo afterwards wrote: it is really full both of the most various kinds of facts, and of thoughts often as curious, on the most various kinds of subjects.

The effect of the publication of the "Wealth of Nations" on the fortunes of its author was very remarkable. It gave the Duke of Buccleuch the power of relieving himself of his annuity,§ by performing the equivalent clause in the bargain: he obtained for Adam Smith a commissionership of customs

*Book i., Chap. vii., Part 3. †Last chapter, near the close.

‡Book iv., Chap. vii., Part 3.

§But he refused to do so, and was vexed with Smith for offering to give it up on obtaining the government position. See Dr. Carlyle's "Autobiography," Chap. vii.—Ed.

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for Scotland, — an appointment of which we do not know the precise income,* but which was clearly, according to the notions of those times, a very good one indeed. A person less fitted to fill it could not indeed easily have been found. Adam Smith had, as we have seen, never been used to pecuniary business of any kind; he had never even taken part in any sort of action out of such business: he was an absent and meditative student. It was indeed during his tenure of this office that, as I have said, he startled a subordinate who asked for his signature by imitating the signature of the last commissioner, instead of giving his own, — of course in pure absence of mind. He was no doubt better acquainted with the theory of taxation than any other man of his time; he could have given a minister in the capital better advice than any one else as to what taxes he should or should not impose: but a commissioner of customs in a provincial city has nothing to do with the imposition of taxes, or with giving advice about them, — his business simply is to see that those which already exist are regularly collected and methodically transmitted, which involves an infinity of transactions requiring a trained man of detail. But a man of detail Adam Smith certainly was not, — at least of detail in business: nature had probably not well fitted him for it, and his mode of life had completed the result and utterly unfitted him. The appointment that was given him was one in which the great abilities which he possessed were useless, and in which much smaller ones which he had not would have been of extreme value.

But in another respect this appointment has been more blamed than I think is just. However small may be the value of Adam Smith's work at the custom-house, the effect of performing it and the time which it occupied prevented him from writing anything more: and it has been thought that posterity

* Dr. Carlyle (Chap. vii.) says £500 a year. — ED.

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has in consequence suffered much; but I own that I doubt this exceedingly. Adam Smith had no doubt made a vast accumulation of miscellaneous materials for his great design; but these materials were probably of very second-rate value. Neither for the history of law nor of science nor of art had the preliminary work been finished, which is necessary before such a mind as Adam Smith's can usefully be applied to them: before the theorizing philosopher must come the accurate historian. To write the history either of law or science or art is enough for the life of any single man; neither have as yet been written with the least approach to completeness. The best of the fragments on these subjects which we now have did not exist in Adam Smith's time; there was therefore but little use in his thinking or writing at large about them. If he had set down for us some account of his residence in France and the society which he saw there, posterity would have been most grateful to him: but this he had no idea of doing; and nobody would now much care for a series of elaborate theories founded upon facts insufficiently collected.

Adam Smith lived for fourteen years after the publication of the "Wealth of Nations"; but he wrote nothing, and scarcely studied anything. The duties of his office, though of an easy and routine character, which would probably have enabled a man bred to business to spend much of his time and almost all his mind on other things, were, we are told, enough to "exhaust his spirits and distract his attention." * And not unnaturally: for those who have ever been used to give all their days to literary work rarely seem able to do that work when they are even in a slight degree struck and knocked against the world; only those who have scarcely ever known what it is to have unbroken calm are able to accomplish much without that calm. During these years Adam Smith's life passed easily and pleasantly in the Edinburgh

* Brougham.

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society of that time, — a very suitable one, for it was one to which professors and lawyers gave the tone, and of which intellectual exertion was the life and being. Adam Smith was, it is true, no easy talker, — was full neither of ready replies nor of prepared replies; he rather liked to listen: but if he talked, — and traps, it is said, were laid to make him do so, — he could expound admirably on the subjects which he knew, and also (which is quite as characteristic of the man as we see him in his works) could run up rapid theories on such data as occurred to him when, as Dugald Stewart tells us in his dignified dialect, "he gave a loose to his genius upon the very few branches of knowledge of which he only possessed the outlines."

He died calmly and quietly, leaving directions about his manuscripts and such other literary things, and saying, in a melancholy way, "I meant to have done more."* The sort of fame which the "Wealth of Nations" has obtained, and its special influence, did not begin in his lifetime, and he had no notion of it; nor would he perhaps have quite appreciated it if he had. His mind was full of his great scheme of the origin and history of all cultivation. As happens to so many men, — though scarcely ever on so great a scale, — aiming at one sort of reputation he attained another; to use Lord Bacon's perpetual illustration, like Saul he "went in search of his father's asses, and he found a kingdom."

Adam Smith has been said to belong to the Macaulay type of Scotchmen; and the saying has been thought a paradox, particularly by those who, having misread Macaulay, think him a showy rhetorician, and not having at all read Adam Smith, think of him as a dry and dull political economist. But the saying is true, nevertheless: Macaulay is anything but a mere rhetorical writer, — there is a very hard kernel of business in him; and Adam Smith is not

* Stewart.

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dry at all, — the objection to him is that he is not enough so, and that the real truth in several parts of his subject cannot be made so interesting as his mode of treatment implies. And there is this fundamental likeness between Macaulay and Adam Smith: that they can both describe practical matters in such a way as to fasten them on the imagination, and not only get what they say read, but get it remembered and make it part of the substance of the reader's mind ever afterwards. Abstract theorists may say that such a style as that of Adam Smith is not suitable to an abstract science; but then, Adam Smith has carried political economy far beyond the bounds of those who care for abstract science, or who understand exactly what it means. He has popularized it in the only sense in which it can be popularized without being spoiled; that is, he has put certain broad conclusions into the minds of hard-headed men, which are all which they need know and all which they for the most part will ever care for, and he has put those conclusions there ineradicably. This too is what Macaulay does for us in history, — at least what he does best: he engraves indelibly the main outlines and the rough common-sense of the matter; other more refining and perhaps in some respects more delicate minds may add the nicer details, and explain those wavering, flickering, inconstant facts of human nature which are either above common-sense or below it. Both these great Scotchmen excelled in the "osteology of their subject," — a term invented by Dr. Chalmers, a third great Scotchman who excelled in it himself: perhaps indeed it is an idiosyncrasy of their race.

Like many other great Scotchmen, — Macaulay is one of them, — Adam Smith was so much repelled by the dominant Calvinism in which he was born that he never voluntarily wrote of religious subjects, nor, as far as we know, spoke of them. Nothing indeed can repel a man more from such things than what

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Macaulay called the "bray of Exeter Hall"*: what can be worse for people than to hear in their youth arguments, alike clamorous and endless, founded on ignorant interpretations of inconclusive words? As soon as they come to years of discretion, all instructed persons cease to take part in such discussions, and often say nothing at all on the great problems of human life and destiny. Sometimes the effect goes farther, — those subjected to this training become not only silent but careless; there is nothing like Calvinism for generating indifference. The saying goes that Scotchmen are those who believe most or least; and it is most natural that it should be so, for they have been so hurt and pestered with religious stimulants that it is natural they should find total abstinence from them both pleasant and healthy. How far this indifference went in Adam Smith's case we do not exactly know; but there is no reason to think it extended to all religion. On the contrary, there are many traces of the complacent optimism of the eighteenth century; a doctrine the more agreeable to him, perhaps, because it is the exact opposite of Calvinism, and one which was very popular in an easy-going age, though the storms and calamities of a later time dispelled it and have made it seem to us thin and unreal. The only occasion when Adam Smith ever came near to theological discussion was in a letter on Hume's death, in which he said that Hume, one of his oldest friends, was the best man he had ever known, — praise which perhaps was scarcely meant to be taken too literally, but which naturally caused a great storm. The obvious thing to say about it is, that it does not indicate any very lofty moral standard; for there certainly was no sublime excellence in Hume, who, as Carlyle long ago said, "all his life through did not so much morally live as critically investigate."† But though the bigots of his time

* Speech on the Maynooth College Bill.

† Essay on Burns, — roughly quoted.

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misunderstood him, Adam Smith did not by so saying mean to identify himself with irreligion, or even with skepticism.

Adam Smith's life, however, was not like Macaulay's, "a life without a lady:" there are vestiges of an early love affair, though but vague ones. Dugald Stewart — an estimable man in his way, but one of the most detestable of biographers, for he seems always thinking much more of his own words than of the facts he has to relate — says, "In the early part of Mr. Smith's life, it is well known to his friends that he was for several years attached to a young lady of great beauty and accomplishment." But he does not tell us who she was, and "has not been able to learn" "how far his addresses were favorably received," or in fact anything about the matter. It seems, however, that the lady died unmarried; and in that case the unsentimental French novelists say that the gentleman is not often continuously in earnest, for that "a lady cannot be always saying No!" But whether such was the case with Adam Smith or not, we cannot tell: he was a lonely, bookish man, but that may tell both ways; the books may be opposed to the lady, but the solitude will preserve her remembrance.

If Adam Smith did abandon sentiment and devote himself to study, he has at least the excuse of having succeeded; scarcely any writer's work has had so much visible fruit. He has at least annexed his name to a great practical movement which is still in progress through the world: Free Trade has become in the popular mind almost as much his subject as the war of Troy was Homer's, — only curious inquirers think of teachers before the one, any more than of poets before the other. If all the speeches made at our Anti-Corn-Law League were examined, I doubt if any reference could be found to any preceding writer, though the name of Adam Smith was always on men's lips. And in other countries it is the same: "Smithism" is a name of reproach with all who

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reject such doctrines, and of respect with those who believe them; no other name is used equally or comparably by either. So long as the doctrines of Protection exist, — and they seem likely to do so as [long as] human interests are what they are and human nature is what it is, — Adam Smith will always be quoted as the great authority of Anti-Protectionism; as the man who first told the world the truth so that the world could learn and believe it.

And besides this great practical movement, Adam Smith started a great theoretical one also: on one side his teaching created Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright, on another it rendered possible Ricardo and Mr. Mill. He is the founder of that analysis of the "great commerce" which in England we now call "political economy"; and which, dry, imperfect, and unfinished as it is, will be thought by posterity one of the most valuable and peculiar creations of English thought. As far as accuracy goes, Ricardo no doubt began this science; but his whole train of thought was suggested by Adam Smith, and he could not have written without him. So much theory and so much practice have rarely, perhaps never, sprung from a single mind.

Fortunate in many things, Adam Smith was above all things fortunate in his age. Commerce had become far larger, far more striking, far more world-wide than it ever was before, and it needed an effectual explainer. A vigorous Scotchman, with the hard-headedness and the abstractions of his country, trained in England and familiar with France, was the species of man best fitted to explain it; and such a man was Adam Smith.

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*LORD ALTHORP AND THE REFORM ACT OF 1832.**

(1876.)

"ALTHORP carried the Bill," such is the tradition of our fathers; "the Bill," of course, being the Bill to them, — the great Reform Act of 1832, which was like a little revolution in that generation, which really changed so much and which seemed to change so much more. To have been mainly concerned in passing so great a measure seems to many of the survivors of that generation, who remember the struggles of their youth and recall the enthusiasm of that time, almost the acme of fame; and in sober history such men will always be respectfully and gravely mentioned — but all romance has died away. *The* Bill is to us hardly more than other bills; it is one of a great many acts of Parliament which in this day, partly for good and partly for evil, have altered the ever-varying Constitution of England. The special charm, the charm which to the last you may see that Macaulay always felt about it, is all gone; the very history of it is forgotten. Which of the younger generation can say what was General Gascoigne's amendment,† or who were the "waverers," or even how many Reform "bills" in those years there were? The events for which one generation cares most are often those of which the next knows least: they are too old to be matters of personal recollection and they are too new to be subjects of study, they have

* Memoir of John Charles, Viscount Althorp, third Earl Spencer. By the late Sir Denis Le Marchant, Bart. London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1876.

† That the number of members for England and Wales should not be lessened. — ED.

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passed out of memory and they have not got into the books. Of the well-informed young people about us, there are very many who scarcely know who Lord Althorp was.

And in another respect this biography has been unfortunate: it has been kept back too long. The Reform Act of 1867 has shed a painful light on the Reform Act of 1832, and has exhibited in real life what philosophers said were its characteristic defects. While these lingered in the books they were matters of dull teaching, and no one cared for them; but now Mr. Disraeli has embodied them, and they are living among us. The traditional sing-song of mere eulogy is broken by a sharp question. Those who study that time say, "Althorp, you tell us, passed the Bill; it was his frankness and his high character and the rest of his great qualities which did it: but was it good that he should have passed it? would it not have been better if he had not possessed those fine qualities? was not some higher solution possible? Knowing this bill by its fruits, largely good but also largely evil, might we not have had a better bill? At any rate, if it could not be so, show *why* it could not be so; prove that the grave defects in the Act of 1832 were necessary defects; explain how it was that Althorp had no choice, and then we will admire him as you wish us." But to this biographer — a man of that time, then in the House of Commons on the Whig side, and almost, as it were, on the skirts of the Bill — such questions would have seemed impossible: to him, the Act of 1832 is still wonderful and perfect, — the great measure which *we* carried in *my* youth; and as for explaining defects in it, he would have as soon thought of explaining defects in a revelation.

But if ever Lord Althorp's life is well written, it will, I think, go far to explain not only why the Reform Bill was carried, but why that bill is what it was. He embodies all the characteristic virtues

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which enable Englishmen to effect well and easily great changes in politics: their essential fairness, their "large roundabout common-sense,"* their courage, and their disposition rather to give up something than to take the uttermost farthing. But on the other hand, also, he has all the characteristic English defects: their want of intellectual and guiding principle, their even completer want of the culture which would give that principle, their absorption in the present difficulty, and their hand-to-mouth readiness to take what solves it without thinking of other consequences. And I am afraid the moral of those times is, that these English qualities as a whole—merits and defects together—are better suited to an early age of politics than to a later. As long as materials are deficient, these qualities are most successful in hitting off simple expedients, in adapting old things to new uses, and in extending ancient customs; they are fit for instantaneous little creations, and admirable at bit-by-bit growth. But when, by the incessant application of centuries, these qualities have created an accumulated mass of complex institutions, they are apt to fail unless aided by others very different. The instantaneous origination of obvious expedients is of no use when the field is already covered with the heterogeneous growth of complex past expedients; bit-by-bit development is out of place unless you are sure which bit should and which bit should not be developed; the extension of customs may easily mislead when there are so many customs; no immense and involved subject can be set right except by faculties which can grasp what is immense and scrutinize what is involved. But mere common-sense is here matched with more than it can comprehend, like a schoolboy in the differential calculus; and absorption in the present difficulty is an evil, not a good,—for what is wanted is, that you should be able to see many things at once and take in their bearing, not

* See note to page 108, Vol. II.

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fasten yourself on one thing. The characteristic danger of great nations like the Romans or the English, which have a long history of continuous creation, is, that they may at last fail from not comprehending the great institutions which they have created.

No doubt it would be a great exaggeration to say that this calamity happened in its fullness in the year 1832, and it would be most unfair to Lord Althorp to cite him as a complete example of the characteristics which may cause it; but there was something in him of those qualities, and some trace in 1832 of that calamity,—enough in both cases to be a warning. Only a complete history of the time can prove this; but perhaps in a few pages I may a little explain and illustrate it.

Let us first get, both as more instructive and as less tedious than analysis, a picture of the man as he stood in the principal event of his life. A good drawer has thus painted him: Lord Jeffrey, the great Edinburgh Reviewer,—who was an able lawyer and practical man of business in his day, though his criticism on party* has not stood the test of time,—was Lord Advocate in the Reform Ministry of 1830, and he is never tired of describing Lord Althorp.

"There is something," he writes, "to me quite delightful in his calm, clumsy, courageous, immutable probity and well-meaning, and it seems to have a charm for everybody."† "I went to Althorp," he writes again, " . . . and had a characteristic scene with that most honest, frank, true, and stout-hearted of all God's creatures. He had not come down-stairs, and I was led up to his dressing-room, where I found him sitting on a stool, in a dark duffle dressing-gown, with his arms (very rough and hairy) bare above the elbows, and his beard half shaved and half staring through the lather, with a desperate razor in one hand and a great soap-brush in the other. He gave me the loose finger of the brush hand, and with the usual twinkle of his bright eye and radiant smile, he said, 'You need not be anxious about your Scotch bill

*An evident misprint for "poetry."—ED.

†To Lord Cockburn, Feb. 13, 1831; "Life of Jeffrey," Vol. i., page 252.

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for to-night, for I have the pleasure to tell you we are no longer his Majesty's ministers.'"* And soon after he writes again, at a later stage of the ministerial crisis:—"When they came to summon him to a council on the Duke's giving in, he was found in a closet with a groom, busy oiling the locks of his fowling-pieces, and lamenting the decay into which they had fallen during his ministry."† And on another occasion he adds what may serve as an intellectual accompaniment to these descriptions:—"Althorp, with his usual frankness, gave us a pretended confession of faith, and a sort of creed of his political morality; and avowed that though it was a very shocking doctrine to promulgate, he must say that he had never sacrificed his own inclinations to a sense of duty without repenting it, and always found himself more substantially unhappy for having exerted himself for the public good."‡

And some one else at the time said, "The Government cannot be going out, for Althorp looks so very dismal." He was made (as we learn from this volume) a principal minister contrary to his expectation and in opposition to his wish. He was always wanting to resign; he was always uncomfortable, if not wretched;§ and the instant he could do so, he abandoned politics, and would never touch them again, though he lived for many years: and this though in appearance he was most successful, and was almost idolized by his followers and friends.

At first this seems an exception to one of Nature's most usual rules: almost always, if she gives a great faculty she gives also an enjoyment in the use of it; but here Nature had given a remarkable power of ruling and influencing men,—one of the most remarkable (good observers seem to say) given to any Englishman of that generation,—and yet the possessor did not like, but on the contrary much disliked to use it. The explanation however is, that not only

* To Lord Cockburn, May 9, 1832; "Life of Jeffrey," page 257.

† To the same; ibid., page 259.

‡ To the same, Feb. 12, 1832; ibid., Vol. ii. (letters).

§ He told Lord John Russell that as often as he waked in the morning and realized that he was a minister, he wished he was dead ("Recollections and Suggestions," page 106).—Ed.

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had Nature bestowed on Lord Althorp this happy and great gift of directing and guiding men, but as if by some subtle compensation, had added what was under the circumstances a great pain to it,—she had given him a most sluggish intellect; only moving with effort and almost with suffering; generally moving clumsily, and usually following, not suggesting. If you put a man with a mind like this—especially a sensitive, conscientious man, such as Lord Althorp was—to guide men quickly through complex problems of legislation and involved matters of science, no wonder that he will be restive and wish to give up. No doubt the multitude wish to follow him; but where is he to tell the multitude to go? His mind suggests nothing, and there is a pain and puzzle in his brain.

Fortune and education had combined in Lord Althorp's case to develop his defects. His father and mother were both persons of great cultivation; but they were also busy people of the world, and so they left their son to pick up his education as he could. A Swiss footman, who did not know English very well, taught him to read, and "was his sole instructor and most intimate associate till he went to Harrow." His father too being a great fox-hunter, the son clearly cared more for and was more occupied with hounds and animals, as a young boy, than with anything else; and he lived mainly with servants and people also so occupied,—from which, as might be expected, he contracted a shyness and awkwardness which stayed with him through life. When he went to Harrow the previous deficiencies of his education were of course against him, and he seems to have shown no particular disposition to repair them. As far as can now be learnt, he was an ordinary strong-headed and strong-willed English boy, equal to necessary lessons but not caring for them, and only distinguished from the rest by a certain suppressed sensibility and tenderness, which he also retained in

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after years, which softened a manliness that would otherwise have been rugged and which saved him from being unrefined.

At Cambridge his mother, as it appears, suddenly and for the first time took an interest in his studies, and told him she should expect him to be high at his first college examination; and this seems to have awakened him to industry. The examination was in mathematics, which suited him much better than the Harrow classics, and he really came out high in it; the second year it was the same, though he had good competitors: but there his studies ended. His being a nobleman at that time excluded him from the university examinations, and he was far too apathetic to work at mathematics except for something of the sort; and his tutor seems to have discouraged his doing so. Then as since, the bane of Cambridge has been a certain incomplete and rather mean way of treating great studies, which teaches implicitly if not plainly that it was as absurd to learn the differential calculus in and for itself as it would be to keep a ledger for its own sake. On such a mind as Lord Althorp's, which required as much as possible to be awakened and kept awake to the interest of high studies, no external surroundings could have been more fatal: he threw up his reading and took to hounds, betting, and Newmarket, and to all which was then, even if not since, thought to be most natural if not most proper in a young nobleman.

As far as classical studies are concerned he probably lost nothing,—he was through life very opaque to literary interests, and in his letters and speeches always used language in the clumsiest way; but he had—perhaps from his childish field sports—a keen taste for animals and natural history, which nowadays would have been developed into a serious pursuit. And as it was, he had an odd craving for figures, which might have been made something of in mathematics. "He kept," we are told, "an

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account of every shot he fired in the course of the year, whether he missed or killed, and made up the book periodically."* He would not pass the accounts of the Agricultural Society without hunting for a missing threepence;† and when Chancellor of the Exchequer he used, it is said, to do "all his calculations, however complicated, alone in his closet,"—which his biographer thinks very admirable, and contrasts with the habit of Mr. Pitt, "who used to take a Treasury clerk into his confidence,"‡ but which was really very absurd. It is not by such mechanical work that great Budgets are framed; and a great minister ought to know what *not* to do himself, and how to use for everything possible the minds of others. Still, there is much straightforward strength in this, if also some comic dullness.

If Lord Althorp's relatives did not give him a very good education, they did not make up for it by teaching him light accomplishments. They sent him the "grand tour," as it was then called; but he was shy and awkward, seems to have had no previous preparation for foreign society, would not go into it, and returned boasting that he could not speak French. His mother—a woman of great fashion and high culture—must have sighed very much over so uncourtly and so "English" an eldest son.

Then, in the easy way of those times (it was in 1804), he was brought into Parliament for Okehampton, a nomination borough,—some "Mr. Strange," a barrister, retiring in his favor; and his interest being strong, he was made a Lord of the Treasury. But the same apathy to intellectual interests which showed itself at college clung to him here also. He showed energy, but it was not the energy of a man of business. He passed, we are told, the greatest part of his time "in the country; and when he attended at the Treasury, which was very rarely, and only on

* Memoir, closing words of Chap. viii.
† Ibid., Chap. iv. ‡ Ibid.

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particular occasions to make up a board, he returned home immediately afterwards. Indeed, he used to have horses posted on the road from London to Althorp,* and often rode down at night as soon as the House had risen, in order that he might hunt with the Pytchley the next morning."† On these occasions, says another account, "he had no sleep, and often the hacks which he rode would fall down with him on the road."‡ And years afterwards the old clerks of the office used to tell of the rarity and brevity of his visits to the department, and of the difficulty of getting him to stay; all which shows force and character, but still not the sort of character which would fit a man to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. But though he had much of the want of culture, Lord Althorp had none of the unfeelingness which also the modern world is getting somehow to attach to the character of the systematic sportsman; on the contrary, he was one of the many instances which prove that this character may be combined with an extreme sensibility to the sufferings of animals and man. He belonged to the class of men in whom such feelings are far keener than usual, and his inner character approached to the "Arnold type," for "to hear of cruelty or injustice pained him" almost "like a blow."

He, it seems, kept a hunting journal, which tells how his hounds found a fox "at Purser's Hill, ran over old Naseby field to Althorp§ in fifty minutes, and how, after a short check, they hunted him over the finest part of Leicestershire,"‖ and all that sort of thing; but probably it does not tell one the very natural consequence which happened to him from such a life: being a somewhat uncouth person, addicted to dogs and horses,—a "man's man," as Thackeray

* Sixty-six miles; six beyond Northampton.—Ed.

† Memoir, Chap. v.

‡ Lord Lyttelton, note to same paragraph.

§ Which his brother says is probably a mistake for "Holthorpe."—Ed.

‖ Memoir, Chap. viii., near the close.

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used to call it, — he did not probably go much into ladies' society, and was not very aggressive when he was there. But men who do not make advances to women are apt to become victims to women who make advances to them; and so it was with Lord Althorp. He married a Miss Acklom, — a "Diana Vernon" sort of person, "rather stout, and without pretensions to regular beauty;" but nevertheless, it is said, with something "prepossessing" about her, — "well-read, clever," with "a quick perception of the character of others, with much self-dependence:"* and this self-dependence and thought she showed to her great advantage in the principal affair of her life. Lord Althorp's biographer is sure, but does not say how, that the first declaration of love was made by the lady; he was, it seems, too shy to think of such a thing. As a rule, marriages in which a young nobleman is actively captured by an aggressive lady are not domestically happy, though they may be socially useful; but in this case the happiness seems to have been exceptionally great, and when she died after a few years he suffered a very unusual grief. "He went," we are told, "at once to Wiseton," the place where he had lived with her, and "passed several months in complete retirement," finding "his chief occupation" in "reading the Bible;" in which he found at first many grave difficulties, such as the mention of the constellation "Orion" by the prophet Amos, and the high place (an equality with Job and David†) given by Ezekiel to the prophet Daniel when still a young man, and before he had "proved himself a man of so high a caliber as he certainly did afterwards." On these questions, he adds, "I asked Shepherd, the clergyman here, . . . but his answers were not satisfactory." Happily, however, such a man is not at the mercy of clergymen's answers, nor dependent on the petty details of ancient prophets.

*Memoir, Chap. ix.

† Job and *Noah* (Ezek. xiv. 14, 20). It is correctly given in Lord Althorp's letter of Sept. 9, 1818 (Memoir, Chap. x.). — Ed.

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The same sensibility which made him keenly alive to justice and injustice in things of this world went further, and told him of a moral government in things not of this world. No man of or near the Arnold species was ever a skeptic as to, far less an unbeliever in, ultimate religion. New philosophies are not wanted or appreciated by such men; nor are book arguments of any real use, though these men often plod over them as if they were: for in truth an inner teaching supersedes everything, and for good or evil closes the controversy. No discussion is of any effect or force; the court of appeal fixed by nature in such minds is peremptory in belief, and will not hear of any doubt. And so it was in this case: through life Lord Althorp continued to be a man strong, though perhaps a little crude, in religious belief; and thus gained at the back of his mind a solid seriousness which went well with all the rest of it. And his grief for his wife was almost equally durable: he gave up not only society, which perhaps was no great trial, but also hunting,—not because he believed it to be wrong, but because he did not think it seemly or suitable that a man after such a loss should be so very happy as he knew that hunting would make him.

Soon after his marriage he had begun to take an interest in politics, especially on their moral side; and of course the increased seriousness of his character greatly augmented it. Without this change, though he might have thought himself likely to be occasionally useful in outlying political questions, probably he would have had no grave political career, and his life never would have been written. But the sort of interest which he took in politics requires some explanation; for though his time was not very long ago, the change of feeling since then is vast.

"If any person," said Sir Samuel Romilly,—the best of judges, for he lived through the times and was mixed up heart and soul in the matters he speaks

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of,—"if any person be desirous of having an adequate idea of the mischievous effects which have been produced in this country by the French revolution and all its attendant horrors, he should attempt some reforms on humane and liberal principles. He will then find not only what a stupid dread of innovation, but what a savage spirit, it has infused into the minds of his countrymen."* And very naturally, for nothing is so cruel as fear. A whole generation in England, and indeed in Europe, was so frightened by the Reign of Terror that they thought it could only be prevented by another Reign of Terror; the Holy Alliances, as they were then called, meant this and worked for this. Though we had not in name such an alliance in England, we had a state of opinion which did the work of one without one: nine-tenths of the English people were above all things determined to put down "French principles"; and unhappily "French principles" included what we should all now consider obvious improvements and rational reforms. They would not allow the most cruel penal code which any nation ever had to be mitigated,—they did not wish justice to be questioned; they would not let the mass of the people be educated, or at least only so that it came to nothing; they would not alter anything which came down from their ancestors, for in their terror they did not know but there might be some charmed value even in the most insignificant thing: and after what they had seen happen in France, they feared that if they changed a single iota all else would collapse.

Upon this generation, too, came the war passion. They waged, and in the main—though with many errors—waged with power and spirit, the war with Napoleon; and they connected this with their horror of liberal principles in a way which is now very strange to us, but which was very powerful then. We know now that Napoleon was the head of a

*Diary, June 15, 1808; "Memoir," Vol. ii.

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conservative reaction, — a bitter and unfeeling reaction, just like that of the contemporary English; but the contemporary English did not know this. To the masses of them he was *Robespierre à cheval,** as some one called him, — a sort of Jacobin waging war, in some occult way, for liberty and revolution, though he called himself "Emperor." Of course the educated few gradually got more or less to know that Napoleon hated Jacobins and revolution, and liberty too, as much as it is possible to hate them; but the ordinary multitude, up to the end of the struggle, never dreamed of it. Thus, in an odd way, the war passion of the time strengthened its conservative feeling; and in a much more usual way it did so too, for it absorbed men's minds in the story of battles and the glory of victories, and left no unoccupied thought for gradual improvement and dull reform at home. A war time, also, is naturally a harsh time, for the tale of conflicts which sometimes raises men above pain also tends to make men indifferent to it; the familiarity of the idea ennobles, but also hardens.

This savageness of spirit was the more important because, from deep and powerful economical agencies, there was an incessant distress running through society; sometimes less and sometimes more, but always, as we should now reckon, very great. The greatest cause of this was, that we were carrying on or trying to carry on a system of Free Trade under a restrictive tariff: we would not take foreign products, and yet we wished to sell foreigners ours. And our home market was incessantly disordered. First the war and then the Corn Laws confined us chiefly to our own soil for our food; but that soil was of course liable to fail in particular years, and then the price of food rose rapidly, which threw all other markets into confusion, — for people must live first, and can only spend the surplus, after paying the cost of living, upon anything else. The fluctuations in the demand for our

* "Robespierre on horseback."

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manufactures at home were ruinously great, though we were doing all we could to keep them out of foreign markets; and the combined effect was terrible. And the next great cause was, that we were daily extending an unprecedented system of credit without providing a basis for it and without knowing how to manage it. There was no clear notion that credit, being a promise to pay cash, must be supported by proportionate reserves of cash held in store; and that as bullion is the international cash, all international credit must be sustained by a store of bullion. In consequence, all changes for the worse in trade, whether brought on by law or nature, caused a destruction of confidence and diffused an uneasy moral feeling which made them far worse than they would have been otherwise. The immense fluctuations in our commerce, caused by Protection, were aggravated by immense fluctuations in our credit; and the combined result was unspeakably disastrous.

During the French war these causes were not so much felt. Trade was better, because we were creating a foreign market for ourselves. Just as lately, by lending to a miscellaneous mass of foreign countries, we enabled those countries to buy of us, so in the great war, by large subsidies and huge foreign expenditure, we created a "purchasing power" which was ultimately settled by our manufactures. We had nothing else to settle it with; if we did not send them direct, we must use them to buy the bullion, or whatever else it might be which we did send directly.* This "war demand," of which so much is said in the economical literature of those years, of course ceased at the peace; and as we declined to take foreign products in exchange for ours, no substitute for it could be found, and trade languished in consequence. Agriculture, too, was worse after the peace; for the natural Protection given by the war was far more effective than the artificial Protection

* Text, "indirectly," an evident misprint. — ED.

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given by the Corn Laws. The war kept out corn almost equally whatever was the price; but the Corn Laws were based on the "sliding scale," which let in the corn when it became dear. Our farmers, therefore, were encouraged to grow more corn than was enough for the country in good years, which they could not sell; and they did not get a full price in bad years, for the foreign corn came in more and more as the price rose and rose: though the Protection availed to hurt the manufacturer, it was not effectual in helping the farmer. And the constant adversity of other interests, by a reflex action, also hurt him. Committees on agricultural distress and motions as to the relief of trading distress alternate in the parliamentary debates of those years. Our credit system, too, was in greater momentary danger after the peace than before; for during the war it was aided by a currency of inconvertible paper, which absolved us from the necessity of paying our promises in solid cash, though at very heavy cost in other ways, both at the instant and afterwards.

These fluctuations in trade and agriculture of course told on the condition of the working classes; they were constantly suffering, and then the "savage spirit" of which Sir Samuel has spoken showed itself at its worst. Suffering, as usual, caused complaint, and this complaint was called "sedition": the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, harsh laws were passed, and a harsher administration incited to put it down. It could not be put down; it incessantly smoldered and incessantly broke out: and for years England was filled with the fear of violence, first by the breakers of the law and then by the enforcers of it.

Resistance to such a policy as this was most congenial to a nature half unhinged by misfortune, and always in itself most sensitive and opposed to injustice. Even before his wife's death, Lord Althorp had begun to exert himself against it; and afterwards he threw the whole vigor not only of his mind but

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of his body into it. So far from running away perpetually to hunt, as in old times, he was so constant in his attendance in Parliament that tradition says hardly any one, except the clerks at the table, was more constantly to be seen there. He opposed all the acts by which the Tory Government of the day tried to put down disaffection instead of curing it, and his manly energy soon made him a sort of power in Parliament. He was always there, always saying what was clear, strong, and manly: and therefore the loosely knit Opposition of that day was often guided by him; and the ministers, though strong in numerical majority, feared him, — for he said things that the best of that majority understood, in a rugged English way which changed feelings even if it did not alter votes. He was a man whom every one in the House respected, and who therefore spoke to prepossessed hearers. No doubt, too, the peculiar tinge which grief had given to his character added to his influence. He took no share in the pleasures of other men; though a nobleman of the highest place, still young as we should now reckon (he was only thirty-six when Lady Althorp died), he stood aloof from society, which courted him, and lived for public business only: and therefore he had great weight in it, for the English very much value obviously conscientious service, and the sobered fox-hunter was a somewhat interesting character.

He had not indeed any clear ideas of the cause of the difficulties of the time, or of the remedies for them. He did no doubt attend much to economical questions; and his taste for figures, shown before in calculating the ratio of his good shots to his bad, made statistical tables even pleasing to him. His strong sense, though without culture and without originality, struggled dimly and sluggishly with the necessary problems. But considering that he lived in the days of Huskisson and Ricardo, his commercial ideas are crude and heavy. He got as far as the

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notion that the substitution of direct taxes for the bad tariff of those days would be "a good measure"; but when he came to apply the principle, he failed from inability to work it out. Nor did years of discussion effectually teach him: in his great Budget of 1832—the first which the Whigs had made for many years, and at which therefore every one looked with unusual expectation—he proposed to take off a duty on tobacco and to replace it by a tax on the transfer of real and funded property, together with a tax on the import of raw cotton; and it was the necessity of having to withdraw the larger part of this plan that more than anything else first gave the Whigs that character for financial incapacity which clung to them so long. A crude good sense goes no way in such problems, and it is useless to apply it to them. The other economical problem of the time, how to lay a satisfactory basis for our credit, Lord Althorp was still less able to solve, and excusably so; for the experience which has since taught us so much did not exist, and the best theories then known were very imperfect. The whole subject was then incumbered with what was called the "currency question"; and on this Lord Althorp's views were fairly sensible, but no more.

I have said what may seem too much of the distresses of the country fifty or sixty years ago, not only because the mode in which he dealt with them is the best possible illustration of Lord Althorp's character, but also because some knowledge of them is necessary to an understanding of "parliamentary reform," as it was in his time, on account of which alone any one now cares for him. The "bill," if I may say so, for these miseries of the country was sent in to the old system of parliamentary representation; and very naturally. The defenders of that system of necessity conceded that it was anomalous, complex, and such as it would have been impossible to set up *de novo;* but they argued that it was

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practically successful, worked well, and promoted the happiness of the people better than any other probably would. And to this the inevitable rejoinder at the time was:—"The system does not work well; the country is not happy: if your system is, as you say, to be judged by its fruits, that system is a bad system, for its fruits are bad and the consequences everywhere to be seen in the misery around us." Upon many English minds which would have cared nothing for an apparent work* of theoretical completeness, this "practical" way of arguing, as it was called, pressed with irresistible strength.

The unpopularity was greater because a new generation was growing up, with "other thoughts" and "other minds" than that which had preceded it. Between 1828† and 1830 a new race came to influence public affairs, who did not remember the horrors of the French revolution, and who had been teased to death by hearing their parents talk about them. The harsh and cruel spirit which those horrors had awakened in their contemporaries became itself, by the natural law of reaction, an object of disgust and almost of horror to the next generation. When it was said that the old structure of Parliament worked well, this new race looked not only at the evident evils amid which they lived, but at the oppressive laws and administration by which their fathers had tried to cure those evils; and they "debited" both to the account of the old Parliament. It was made responsible for the mistaken treatment as well as for the deep-rooted disease, and so the gravest clouds hung over it.

The Duke of Wellington, too (the most unsuccessful of premiers as well as the most successful of generals), broke the Tory party — the natural party to

*I suspect Bagehot here *wrote* "argument" in a sprawling hand, and that the compositor translated it into these two meaningless words. — ED.

†Unquestionably a misprint for "1820": the "new race" was more than two years in coming on the stage, and those born the year that Robespierre was guillotined were twenty-six in 1820. — ED.

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support this system—into fragments. With a wise renunciation both of his old principles and of his fixed prejudices he had granted "Catholic Emancipation," and so offended the older and stricter part of his followers; they accused him of treachery, and hated him with a hatred of which in this quiet age, when political passion is feeble, we can hardly form an idea. And he then quarreled, also, with the best of the moderate right,—Mr. Huskisson and the Canningites. He had disliked Mr. Canning personally when alive, he hated still more the liberal principles which he had begun to introduce into our foreign policy, and he was an eager, despotic man, who disliked difference of opinion; so just when he had broken with the most irrational section of his party, he broke with its most rational members too, and left himself very weak. No one so much, though without meaning it, aided the cause of parliamentary change, for he divided and enfeebled the supporters of the old system: he took away the question of Catholic Emancipation which before filled the public mind; and he intensified the unpopularity of all he touched by the idea of a "military premier," for which we should not care now, but which was odious and terrible then, when men still feared oppression from the government.

Upon minds thus predisposed, the French revolution of 1830 broke with magical power; to the young generation it seemed like the fulfillment of their dreams.

> "The meager, stale, forbidding ways
> Of custom, law, and statute took at once
> The attraction of a country in romance,"

and lively [natures*] thought that they might be

> "Called upon to exercise their skill,
> Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
> Or some secluded island, heaven knows where,

*Evidently omitted by mistake; see "Prelude," a few lines beyond extract above.—ED.

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But in the very world which is the world
Of all of us." *

And even to soberer persons this new revolution seemed to prove that change, even great change, was not so mischievous as had been said; that the good of 1789 might be gained without the evil, and that it was absurd not to try reform when the unreformed world contained so much which was miserable and so much which was difficult to bear. Even a strong Tory ministry might have been overthrown, so great was the force of this sudden sentiment: the feeble ministry of the Duke of Wellington fell at once before it, and the Whigs were called to power.

Their first act was to frame a plan of parliamentary reform; and that which they constructed was many times larger than anything which any one expected from them. All those who remember those times say that when they heard what was proposed, they could hardly believe their ears; and when it was explained to the House of Commons, the confusion, the perplexity, and the consternation were very great, — reform naturally was much less popular in the assembly to be reformed than it was elsewhere. The general opinion † was, that if Sir Robert Peel had risen at once and denounced the bill as destructive and revolutionary, he might have prevented its being brought in; another common opinion in the House

* Wordsworth, "Prelude," Book xi. As a curiosity, I give below the atrocious doggerel into which bad manuscript and the author's neglect of his proofs converted this in the *Review*, and which was not corrected in the reprint, but stands a wonder to all generations. — ED.

"The meager, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute took at once
The attraction of a country in romance,
And lively thought that they might be
Called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secluded island, heaven knows where,
But in the very world which is the world *
Of all of us."

† *Brougham's* opinion (see Le Marchant's Memoir, Chap. XV.). — ED.

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was, that "the Whigs would go out next morning." But the bill had been framed by one who, with whatever other shortcomings and defects, has ever had a shrewd eye for the probable course of public opinion. "I told Lord Grey," says Lord Russell, "that none but a large measure would be a safe measure;"* and accordingly, as soon as its provisions came to be comprehended by the country, there was perhaps the greatest burst of enthusiasm which England has ever seen, — certainly the greatest enthusiasm for a law, though that for a favorite person may sometimes have risen as high or higher. A later satirist has spoken of it as "the great bill for giving everybody everything;" and everybody almost seems to have been as much in favor of it as if they were to gain everything by it. Agricultural counties were as eager as manufacturing towns; men who had always been Tories before were as warm as Liberals. The country would have "the Bill, the whole Bill, and nothing but the Bill."†

But this enthusiasm did not of itself secure the passing of the bill: there were many obstacles in the way which it took months to overcome, and which often made many despair. First, the bill was not one of which the political world itself strongly approved; on the contrary, if left to itself, that world would probably have altogether rejected it. It was imposed by the uninitiated on the initiated, by the many on the few; and inevitably those who were compelled to take it did not like it. Then, the vast proposals of the ministry deeply affected many private interests. In 1858 I heard an able politician say, "The best way

*I do not know what this refers to. In his "Recollections and Suggestions," page 57, he says that the outline of the bill was his, that "Lord Grey was persuaded that nothing but a large reform of Parliament would ward off revolution," and that he (Lord John) was "fully persuaded that the country would respond with enthusiasm to a large proposal of reform;" but just these words do not appear. — ED.

†The popular cry of the time; Lord John Russell (ibid., page 60) says it was originated by Brougham. — ED.

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for a Government to turn itself out is to bring in a reform bill: the number of persons whom every such bill must offend is very great, and they are sure to combine together — not on reform but on something else — and so turn out the Government." And if there was serious danger to a ministry which ventured to propose such petty reforms as were thought of in 1858, we can imagine the magnitude of the danger which the ministry of 1832 incurred from the great measure they then brought in. One member indeed rose and said, "I am the proprietor of Ludgershall, I am the member for Ludgershall, I am the constituency of Ludgershall, and in all three capacities I assent to the disfranchisement of Ludgershall;"* but the number of persons who were so disinterested was rare. † The Bill of 1832 affected the franchise of every constituency, and therefore the seat of every member; it abolished the seats of many, and destroyed the right of nomination to seats also possessed by many: and nothing could be more repugnant to the inclinations of most. A House of Commons with such a bill before it was inevitably captious, unruly, and difficult to guide. And even if there had been or could have been a House of Commons which at heart liked the bill, there would still have been the difficulty that many other people then most influential did not much like it. A great many members of the Cabinet which proposed it, though they believed it to be necessary, did not think it to be desirable: the country would have some such measure, and therefore they proposed this. "Lord Palmerston and Mr. Grant," says Lord Russell, "had, with Lord Melbourne, followed Mr. Canning in his opposition to Parliamentary Reform. Lord Lansdowne and Lord Holland had never been very eager on the subject." ‡ Lord Brougham did

*Sir Sandford Graham, July 22, 1831; but Hansard gives no such racy wording to his speech. — ED.

† This should read "small." — ED.

‡ "Recollections and Suggestions," page 57.

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not approve of the disfranchisement of nearly so many boroughs, and others of the Cabinet were much of the same mind. Their opinion was always dubious, their action often reluctant; and according to Mr. Greville, some of the most influential of them, being very sensitive to the public opinion of select political society, were soon "heartily ashamed of the whole thing."*

The House of Lords, too, was adverse; not only as an assembly of men mostly rich and past middle age is ever adverse to great political change, or as a privileged assembly is always hostile to any movement which may destroy it, but for a reason peculiar to itself. The English House of Lords, as we all know, is not a rigid body of fixed number, like the upper chambers of book constitutions, but an elastic body of unfixed number, — the Crown can add to its members when it pleases and as it pleases: and in various ways which I need not enumerate now, this elasticity of structure has been of much use; but in one way it does much harm. The Crown for this purpose means the ministry; the ministry is appointed by a party and is the agent of that party, and therefore it makes peers from its own friends all but exclusively. Under a Tory Government more than nine-tenths of the new peers will be Tory, under a Whig Government more than nine-tenths will be Whig: and if for a long course of years either party has been continuously, or nearly so, in power, the House of Lords will be filled with new members belonging to it. And this is a serious inconvenience: because the longer any party has been thus in power, the more likely it is to have to go out and lose power; and the new ministry which comes in, and the new mode of thought which that ministry embodies, finds

* I find no such words in Greville's Memoirs. Under date of March 10, 1831, he says, "everybody heartily sick of it" (the *debate* on the first Reform Bill); on Oct. 1, "There is nothing more curious in this question than the fact that it is almost impossible to find anybody who is satisfied with the part he himself takes upon it." — ED.

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itself face to face with a House of Peers embodying an antagonistic mode of thought, and one formed by its enemies. In 1831 this was so; for the Tories had been in office almost without a break since 1784, had created peers profusely, who were all Tories, and added the Irish elective peers, who, from the mode of election, were all Tories too. In consequence, the reform movement of 1831 and 1832 found itself obstinately opposed to a hostile House of Lords, whose antagonism aided the reluctance diffused through the House of Commons, and fostered the faint-heartedness common in the Cabinet. The King, too, who had begun by being much in favor of reform, gradually grew frightened. His correspondence with Lord Grey gives a vivid picture of a well-meaning but irresolute man, who is much in the power of the last speaker, who at last can be securely relied on by no one, and who gives incessant (and as it seems unnecessary) trouble to those about him. The rising republicanism of the day will find in these letters much to serve it; for however convinced one may be, on general grounds, that English royalty was necessary to English freedom at that time, it is impossible not to be impatient at seeing how, month after month in a great crisis, when there was so much else to cause anxiety and create confusion, one stupid old man should have been able to add so much to both.

And all through the struggle the two effects of the new French revolution were contending with one another: just as it aroused in young and sanguine minds (and the majority of the country was just then disposed to be sanguine) the warmest hopes, in minds oppositely predisposed it aroused every kind of fear. Old and timid people thought we should soon have in England "Robespierre and the guillotine." Indeed, in a way that it is rather amusing now to consider, the French horrors of 1793 are turned into a kind of intellectual shuttlecock by two disputants. One says, "See what comes of making rash changes: how many

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crimes they engender, and how many lives they lose!" "No," replies the other, "see what comes of not making changes till too late; for it was delay of change and resistance to change which caused those crimes and horrors."* Nor were these unreal words of mere rhetoric, — they told much on many minds; for what France had done and would do then naturally filled an immense space in men's attention, as, for so many years not long since, Europe had been divided into France and anti-France.

With all these obstacles in its way, the ministry of 1831 had the greatest difficulty in carrying the Reform Bill. I have not space to narrate, even in the briefest way, the troubled history of their doing so. Parliamentary debates are generally dull in the narration; but so great was the excitement, and so many were the relieving circumstances, that an accomplished historian will be able to make posterity take some sort of exceptional interest in these. The credit of the victory, such as it is, must be divided between many persons. Lord Grey managed the King, and stood first in the eye of the country; Lord Russell contributed the first sketch of the bill, containing all its essential features both good and bad, and he introduced the first bill into the House of Commons; the late Lord Derby then first showed his powers as a great debater. But the best observers say that Lord Althorp carried the bill: he was leader of the House at the time, and the main strain of ruling one of the most troubled of Parliaments was on him. His biographer, Sir Denis Le Marchant, who was present at the debates, says: —

"Lord Althorp's capacity as a leader had been severely tested throughout this tremendous struggle, and it extorted the praise even of his political opponents. I recollect Sir Henry Hardinge saying, 'It was Althorp carried the bill. His fine temper did it. Once, in answer to a most able and argumentative speech of Croker, he

* Macaulay *passim;* see especially his second speech on the Reform Bill, July 5, 1831. — ED.

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rose and merely observed that "he had made some calculations which he considered as entirely conclusive in refutation of the right honorable gentleman's arguments, but unfortunately he had mislaid them; so that he could only say that if the House would be guided by his advice they would reject the amendment," — which they did accordingly. There was no standing against such influence as this.' The Whigs ascribed Lord Althorp's influence not to his temper alone, but to the confidence felt by the House in his integrity and sound judgment, — an opinion so universal that Lord Grey was induced by it to press upon him a peerage, that he might take charge of the bill in the committee of the Lords; and the design was abandoned not from any hesitation or unwillingness on the part of Lord Althorp, but from the difficulty of finding a successor to him in the Commons." *

So bad a speaker, with so slow a mind, has never received so great a compliment in a scene where quickness and oratory seem at first sight to be the most absolutely requisite of qualities; † but it is no doubt a great mistake to imagine that these qualities are the true essentials to success of this kind. A very shrewd living judge says, after careful reflection, that they are even hurtful: "A man," says Mr. Massey in his history, "who speaks seldom and who speaks ill, is the best leader of the House of Commons;" ‡ and no doubt the slow-speeched English gentlemen rather sympathize with slow speech in others. Besides, a quick and brilliant leader is apt to be always speaking; whereas a leader should interfere only when necessary, and be therefore felt as a higher force when he does so. His mind ought to be like a reserve fund: not invested in showy securities, but sure to be come at when wanted, and always of staple value. And this Lord Althorp's mind was: there was not an epigram in the whole of it; everything was solid and ordinary. Men seem to have

* Memoir, Chap. xix., closing paragraph.

† The preceding lines are in the text printed erroneously as part of the quotation from Le Marchant. — Ed.

‡ The correct quotation is, "A prudent man, who says as little as possible, who is no orator and not a very good speaker, is the best leader of the House of Commons" ("History of England," Chap. xii., speaking of Addington). — Ed.

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trusted him much as they trust a faithful animal, entirely believing that he would not deceive if he could and that he could not if he would.

And what then was this great "Bill"—which it was so great an achievement to pass? Unfortunately, this is not an easy question to answer shortly. "The Bill" destroyed many old things and altered many old things, and we cannot understand its effects except in so far as we know what these old things were.

"A variety of rights of suffrage," said Sir James Mackintosh, "is the principle of the English representation."* How that variety began is not at all to the present purpose: it grew as all English things grow,—by day-by-day alterations from small beginnings; and the final product was very different from the first beginning, as well as from any design which ever at any one time entered any one's mind. There always was a great contrast between the mode of representation in boroughs and in counties, because there was a great contrast in social structure between them; the "knight of the shire" was differently chosen from the "burgess of the town," because the "shire" was a different sort of place from the town, and the same people could not have chosen for the two, the same people not existing in the two. The borough representations of England, too, "struggled up"—there is hardly any other word to describe it—in a most irregular manner. The number of towns which sent representatives is scarcely ever the same in any two of our oldest Parliaments. The sheriff had a certain discretion, for the writ only told him to convene "de quolibet burgo duos burgenses," and did not name any towns in particular. Most towns then disliked the duty, and evaded it if possible; which seems to have augmented the sheriff's power, for he could permit or prevent the evasion as much as he chose. And at a very early period, great

* For the context of this, see Vol. iv., pages 336-338.

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differences grew up between the ways of election in the towns which were always represented. There seems to have been a kind of "natural selection,"—the most powerful class in each borough chose, if it could, at each election; and if any class long continued the most powerful, it then acquired customary rights of election which came to be unalterable. Nor was there any good deciding authority to regulate this confusion: the judge of elections was the House of Commons itself, and it often decided not according to law or evidence, but as political or personal influence dictated; and rights of election thus capriciously recognized became binding on the borough forever. As might be expected, the total result was excessively miscellaneous. The following are the franchises of the boroughs in two counties as legislators of 1832 found them:—

SOMERSETSHIRE.

BRISTOL, . . . Freeholders of 40*s.*, and free burgesses.
BATH, ... Mayor, aldermen, and common-councilmen only.
WELLS, ... Mayor, masters, burgesses, and freemen of the seven trading companies of the said city.
TAUNTON, . . . [Householders or "pot-boilers," anciently called] Potwallers, not receiving alms or charity.
BRIDGEWATER, . [The corporation, consisting of the] Mayor, aldermen, and twenty-four capital burgesses of the borough paying scot and lot.
ILCHESTER, . . . Alleged to be the inhabitants of the said town paying scot and lot, which the town called "potwallers."
MINEHEAD, . . The parishioners of Dunster and Minehead, being housekeepers in the borough of Minehead, and not receiving alms.
MILBORN PORT, . The capital bailiffs and their deputies, the number of bailiffs being nine, and their deputies being two; the commonalty stewards, their number being two; and the inhabitants thereof paying scot and lot.

LANCASHIRE.

LANCASTER, . . Freemen only.
PRESTON, . . . All the inhabitants.

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LIVERPOOL, . . Mayor, bailiffs, and freemen not receiving alms.
CLITHEROE, . . Freeholders, resident and non-resident.
NEWTON, . . . [Freeholders of 40*s.*, joint tenants having but one vote. Proprietary borough.]
WIGAN, ... [Supposed to be the] Free burgesses. *

Nothing could be more certain than that a system which was constructed in this manner must sooner or later need great alteration. Institutions which have grown from the beginning by adaptation may last as long as any, if they continue to possess the power of adaptation, — the force which created them still exists to preserve them; but in this case the power of adaptation was gone. A system of representation made without design was fixed as eternal upon a changing nation, and somehow or other it was sure to become unsuitable. Nothing could be more false in essence than the old anti-reform arguments as far as they affected the "wisdom of our ancestors"; for the characteristic method of our ancestors had been departed from. Our ancestors changed what they wanted bit by bit, just when and just as they wanted; but their descendants were forbidden to do so: they were asked to be content not only with old clothes, but with much-patched old clothes which they were denied the power to patch again; and this sooner or later they were sure to refuse.

In 1832 a grave necessity existed for changing it. The rude principle of natural selection by which it had been made, insured that (at least approximately) the classes most influential in the nation would have a proportionate power in the legislation, † — no great class was likely to be denied anything approaching to its just weight; but now that a system framed in one age was to be made to continue unchanged through after ages, there was no such security. On the contrary, the longer the system went on without

* See note to page 376, Vol. iv.

† Probably a misprint for "legislature." — ED.

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change, the more sure it was to need change; some new class was sure in course of time to grow up for which the fixed system provided no adequate representatives: and the longer that system continued fixed, the surer was this to happen and the stronger was it likely that this class would be. In 1832 such a class had arisen of the first magnitude: the trading wealth of the country had created a new world, which had no voice in Parliament comparable to that which it had in the country. Not only were some of the greatest towns, like Birmingham and Manchester, left without any members at all, but in most other towns the best of the middle class felt that they had no adequate power: they were either extinguished by a franchise too exclusive or swamped by one too diffused; either way they were powerless.

There was equal reason to believe that by the same inevitable course of events, some class would come to have more power in Parliament than it should: the influences which gave the various classes their authority at the time in which the machinery of our representation was framed, would be sure in time to ebb away, wholly or in part, from some of them; and in matter of fact they did so, — the richer nobility and the richer commoners had come to have much more power than they ought. The process of letting the most influential people in a borough choose its members amounted in time to letting the great nobleman or great commoner to whom the property of the town belonged, choose them; and many counties had fallen into the direction of the same hands also: so that it was calculated, if not with truth at any rate with an approach to it, that one hundred and seventy-seven lords and gentlemen chose as many as three hundred and fifty-five English members of Parliament.* The parliamentary power of these few rich peers and squires was much too great when compared with their share in the life of the nation,

* See Vol. iv., page 381.

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just as that of the trading class was too weak; the excess of the one made the deficiency of the other additionally difficult to bear: and the contrast was more than ever galling in the years from 1830 to 1832, because just then the new French revolution had revived the feud between the privileged classes and the non-privileged. The excessive parliamentary power of these few persons had before been a yoke daily becoming heavier and heavier, and now it could be endured no longer.

The "Reform Bill" amended all this: it abolished a multitude of nomination boroughs, gave members to large towns and cities, and changed the franchise so that in all boroughs, at any rate, the middle classes obtained predominant power. And no one can deny that the good so done was immense; indeed, no one does now deny it, for the generation of Tories that did so has passed away. No doubt the Reform Act did not produce of itself at once the new heaven and new earth which its more ardent supporters expected of it. It did nothing to remove the worst evils from which the country suffered; for those evils were not political but economical, and the classes whom it enfranchised were not more economically instructed than those whom they superseded. The doctrine of Protection then reigned all through the nation, and while it did so no real cure for those evils was possible. But this act, coming as it did when a new political generation was prepared to make use of it, got rid entirely of the "cruel spirit" by which our distresses had been repressed before, and which was as great an evil as those distresses themselves, introduced many improvements — municipal reform, tithe reform, and such like — in which the business-like habit of mind due to the greater power of the working classes mainly helped, and diffused a sweeter and better spirit through society.

But these benefits were purchased at a price of the first magnitude, though from the nature of it its

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payment was long deferred. The reformers of 1832 dealt with the evils of their time, as they would have said, in an English way, and without much thinking of anything else; and exactly in that English way, as they had under their hands a most curious political machine which had grown without design, and which produced many very valuable though not very visible effects, they without thought injured and destroyed some of the best parts of it.

First, the old system of representation, as we have seen, was based on a variety of franchises. But in order to augment the influence of the middle class, the reformers of 1832 destroyed that variety: they introduced into every borough the £10 household franchise, and (with a slight exception which we need not take account of) made that franchise the only one in all boroughs. They raised the standard in the boroughs in which it was lower than £10, and lowered it in those where it was higher; and in this way they changed the cardinal principle of the system which they found established, for uniformity as the rule instead of variety.

And this worked well enough at first, for there was not for some years after 1832 much wish for any more change in our constituencies; but in our own time we have seen the harm of it. If you establish any uniform franchise in a country, then it at once becomes a question, What sort of franchise is it to be? Those under it will say that they are most unjustly excluded; they will deny that there is any real difference between themselves and those above; they will show without difficulty that some whom the chosen line leaves out are even better than those whom it takes in: and they will raise the cry so familiar in our ears, — the cry of "class legislation." They will say, "Who are these £10 householders, these arbitrarily chosen middle-class men, that they should be sole electors? Why should they be alone enfranchised and all others practically disfranchised,

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either by being swamped by their more numerous votes or by not having votes at all?" The case is the stronger because one of the most ancient functions of Parliament, and especially the Commons House of Parliament, is the reformation of grievances. This suited very well with the old system of variety: in that miscellaneous collection of constituencies every class was sure to have some members who represented it. There were then working-class constituencies sending members to speak for them: "men," says Mackintosh, "of popular talents, principles, and feelings; quick in suspecting oppression, bold in resisting it; not thinking favorably of the powerful; listening almost with credulity to the complaints of the humble and the feeble; and impelled by ambition, where they are not prompted by generosity, to be the champions of the defenseless."* And in cases of popular excitement, especially of erroneous excitement, this plan insured that it should have adequate expression, and so soon made it calm. But the legislation of 1832 destroyed these workingmen's constituencies; "they put the country," as it was said afterwards, "under ten-pounders only:" and in consequence there are in our boroughs now nothing but working-class constituencies, there are no longer any £10 householders at all. There is throughout our boroughs a uniform sort of franchise, and that the worst sort,—a franchise which gives the predominance to the most ignorant and the least competent, if they choose to use it. The middle classes have as little power as they had before 1832; and the only difference is, that before 1832 they were ruled by those who were richer than themselves, and now they are ruled by those who are poorer.

No doubt there is still an inequality in the franchise between counties and boroughs,—the sole remnant of the variety of our ancient system: but that inequality is much more difficult to defend now, when

* See Vol. iv., page 337, for more of this extract.

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it stands alone, than it was in old times when it was one of many; and the "ugly rush" of the lower orders, which has effaced the "hard and fast" line established in 1832, threatens to destroy this remnant of variety. In a few years probably there will be but one sort of franchise throughout all England, and the characteristic work of 1832 will be completely undone; the middle classes, whose intelligence Macaulay praised and to whom he helped to give so much power, will have had all that power taken away from them.

No doubt, too, there is still a real inequality of influence, though there is a legal equality of franchise. The difference of size between different boroughs gives more power to those in the small boroughs than to those in the large; and this is very valuable, for elections for large boroughs are costly, and entail much labor that is most disagreeable. But here again the vicious precedent of establishing uniformity set in 1832 is becoming excessively dangerous: being so much used to it, people expect to see it everywhere; there is much risk that before long there may be only one sort of vote and only one size of constituency all over England, and then the reign of monotony will be complete.

And secondly, the reformers of 1832 committed an almost worse error in destroying one kind of select constituency without creating an intellectual equivalent. We are not used nowadays to think of nomination boroughs as select constituencies; but such in truth they were, and such they proved themselves to be at perhaps the most critical period of English history. Lord Russell, no favorable judge, tells us that it "enabled Sir Robert Walpole to consolidate the throne of the house of Hanover amidst internal and external dangers."* No democratic suffrage would †

* "Recollections and Suggestions," page 76. It is hardly necessary to say that Lord John proceeds at once to show what else of a very different sort they "enabled" to be done. — ED.

† An evident misprint for "could." — ED.

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then have been relied on for that purpose; for the mass of Englishmen were then more or less attached to their hereditary king, and they might easily have been induced to restore him. They had not indeed a fanatical passion of loyalty towards him, nor any sentiment which would make them brave many dangers on his behalf; but there was much sluggish and sullen prejudice which might have been easily aroused to see that he had his rights, and there were many relics of ancient loyal zeal which might have combined with that prejudice and ennobled it. Nor did the people of that day much care for what we should now call "parliamentary government." The educated opinion of that day was strongly in favor of the house of Hanover; but the numerical majority of the nation was not equally so, — perhaps it would have preferred the house of Stuart. But the higher nobility and the richer gentry possessed a great power over the opinions of Parliament, because many boroughs were subject to their control; and by exerting that power, they in conjunction with the trading classes, who were then much too weak to have moved by themselves, fixed the house of Hanover on the throne, and so settled the freedom of England. These boroughs at that time, for this purpose being select constituencies, were of inestimable value; because they enabled the most competent opinion in England to rule without dispute, when under any system of diffused suffrage that opinion would either have been outvoted or almost so.

And to the last these boroughs retained much of this peculiar merit: they were an organ for what may be called "specialized" political thought, for trained intelligence busy with public affairs. Not only did they bring into Parliament men of genius and ability, but they kept together a higher political world, capable of appreciating that genius and ability when young and of learning from it when old. The Whig party, such as it was in those days especially,

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rested on this parliamentary power: in them was a combination of more or less intelligent noblemen of liberal ideas and aims, who chose such men as Burke and Brougham and Hume* and at last Macaulay, to develop those ideas and to help to attain those aims. If they had not possessed this peculiar power, they would have had no such intellectual influence: they would have simply been gentlemen of what we now think good ideas, with no special means of advancing them. And they would not have been so closely combined together as they were: they would have been scattered persons of political intelligence. But having this power, they combined together, lived together, thought together; and the society thus formed was enriched and educated by the men of genius whom it selected as instruments, and in whom in fact it found teachers. And there was something like it on the Government side, though the long possession of power and perhaps the nature of Toryism somewhat modified its characteristics.

The effect is to be read in the parliamentary debates of those times. Probably they are absolutely better than our own, — they are intrinsically a better discussion of the subjects of their day than ours are of our subjects; but however this may be, they are beyond question relatively better. General knowledge of politics has greatly improved in the last fifty years, and the best political thought of the present day is much superior to any which there was then; so that even if our present parliamentary debates retained the level of their former excellence, they would still not bear the same relation to the best thought of the present that the old ones bear to the best thought of the past. And if the debates have really fallen off much (as I am sure they have), this conclusion will be stronger and more certain.

Nor is this to be wondered at: if you lessen the cause, you will lessen the effect too. Not only are

* An evident and ludicrous misprint for "Horner." — Ed.

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the men whom these select constituencies brought into Parliament not now to be found there, but the society which formed those constituencies and which chose those men no longer exists. The old parties were combinations partly aristocratic, partly intellectual, cemented by the common possession and the common use of political power; but now that the power is gone, the combinations are dissolved. The place which once knew them knows them no more; any one who looks for them in our present London and our present politics will scarcely find much that is like them.

This society sought for those whom it thought would be useful to it, in all quarters. There was a regular connection between the "Unions"—the great debating societies of Oxford and Cambridge—and Parliament. Young men who seemed promising had even a chance of being competed for by both parties: we all know the line[s] which the wit of Brookes's made upon Mr. Canning,—

> "The turning of coats so common is grown
> That no one would think to attack it;
> But no case until now was so flagrantly known
> Of a schoolboy's turning his jacket."

This meant that, it having been said and believed that Mr. Canning, who had just left Oxford, was to be brought into Parliament by the Whig Opposition, he went over to Mr. Pitt and was brought in by the Tory ministry. The Oxford Liberals of our generation are quite exempt from similar temptations: so far from their support in Parliament being craved by both sides, they cannot enter Parliament at all. When many of these tried to enter Parliament in the autumn of 1867, their egregious failure was one of the most striking events of that remarkable time.

There was a connection, too, then between the two parts of the public service now most completely divided,—the permanent and the parliamentary civil

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services. Now, as we all know, the chief clerks in the Treasury and permanent heads of departments never think of going into Parliament: they regard the parliamentary statesmen who are set to rule over them much as the Bengalees regard the English,— as persons who are less intelligent and less instructed than themselves, but who nevertheless are to be obeyed; they never think of changing places any more than a Hindoo thinks of becoming an Englishman. But in old times, men like Lord Liverpool,* Sir George Rose, and Mr. Huskisson were found eminent in the public offices, and in consequence of that eminence were brought into Parliament. The party in office were then, as now, anxious to obtain competent help in passing measures of finance and detail; and they then obtained it thus, whereas now their successors do not obtain it at all.

There was then, too, a sort of romantic element in the lives of clever young men which is wholly wanting now. Some one said that Macaulay's was like a life in a fairy tale,—he opens a letter which looks like any other letter, and finds that it contains a seat in Parliament; Gibbon says that just as he was destroying an army of barbarians, Sir Gilbert Elliot called and offered him a seat for Liskeard:† great historians will never probably again be similarly interrupted. The effect of all this was to raise the intellectual tone of Parliament. At present the political conversation of members of Parliament—a few of the greatest excepted—is less able and less striking than that of other persons of fair capacity: there is a certain kind of ideas which you hardly ever hear from any other educated person, but which they have to talk to their constituents, and which, if you will let them, they will talk to you too. Some of the middle-aged men of business—the "soap-boilers," as the London world disrespectfully calls them—whom local influence raises to Parliament, really do

* See note, page 349. † Letter to Lord Sheffield, Sept. 10, 1774.

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not seem to know any better, — they repeat the words of the hustings as if they were parts of their creed; and as for the more intellectual members who know better, no one of good manners likes to press them too closely in argument on politics, any more than he likes to press a clergyman too strictly on religion. In both cases the status in the world depends on the belief in certain opinions; and therefore it is thought rather ill-bred, except for some great reason, to try to injure that belief. Intellectual deference used to be paid to members of Parliament; but now — at least in London, where the species is known — the remains of that deference are rare.

The other side of the same phenomenon is the increased power of the provinces, and especially of the constituencies: any gust of popular excitement runs through them instantly, grows greater and greater as it goes, till it gains such huge influence that for a moment the central educated world is powerless. No doubt, if only time can be gained, the excitement passes away; something new succeeds, and the ordinary authority of trained and practiced intelligence revives: but if an election were now to happen at an instant of popular fury, that fury would have little or nothing to withstand it. And even in ordinary times, the power of the constituencies is too great: they are fast reducing the members, especially the weaker sort of them, to delegates. There is already, in many places, a committee which often telegraphs to London hoping that their member will vote this way or that; and the member is unwilling not to do so, because at the next election, if offended, the committee may perchance turn the scale against him: and this dependence weakens the intellectual influence of Parliament, and of that higher kind of mind of which Parliament ought to be the organ.

We must remember that if now we feel these evils, we must expect ere long to feel them much more. The Reform Act of 1867 followed in the main

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the precedent of 1832; and year by year we shall feel its consequences more and more. The two precedents which have been set will of necessity, in the English world which is so much guided by precedent, determine the character of future Reform Acts; and if they do, the supremacy of the central group of trained and educated men which our old system of parliamentary choice created will be completely destroyed, for it is already half gone.

I know it is thought that we can revive this intellectual influence. Many thoughtful reformers believe that by means of Mr. Hare's system of voting, by the cumulative suffrage, the limited suffrage, or by some others like them, we may be able to replace that which the legislation of 1832 began to destroy, and that which those who follow them are destroying; and I do not wish to say a word against this hope,—on the contrary, I think that it is one of the most important duties of English politicians to frame these plans into the best form of which they are capable, and to try to obtain the assent of the country to them: but the difficulty is immense. The reformers of 1832 destroyed intellectual constituencies in great numbers without creating any new ones, and without saying—indeed, without thinking—that it was desirable to create any. They thus, by conspicuous action which is the most influential mode of political instruction, taught mankind that an increase in the power of numbers was the change most to be desired in England; and of course the mass of mankind are only too ready to think so,—they are always prone to believe their own knowledge to be "for all practical purposes" sufficient, and to wish to be emancipated from the authority of the higher culture. What we have now to do, therefore, is to induce this self-satisfied, stupid, inert mass of men to admit its own insufficiency, which is very hard; to understand fine schemes for supplying that insufficiency, which is harder; and to exert itself to get those ideas adopted,

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which is hardest of all. Such is the duty which the reformers of 1832 have cast upon us.

And this is what of necessity must happen if you set men like Lord Althorp to guide legislative changes in complex institutions. Being without culture, they do not know how these institutions grew; being without insight, they only see one half of their effect; being without foresight, they do not know what will happen if they are enlarged; being without originality, they cannot devise anything new to supply if necessary the place of what is old. Common-sense no doubt they have; but common-sense without instruction can no more wisely revise old institutions than it can write the Nautical Almanac. Probably they will do some present palpable good, but they will do so at a heavy cost; years after they have passed away, the bad effects of that which they did and of the precedents which they set will be hard to bear and difficult to change. Such men are admirably suited to early and simple times, — English history is full of them, and England has been made mainly by them; but they fail in later times, when the work of the past is accumulated, and no question is any longer simple. The simplicity of their one-ideaed minds, which is suited to the common arithmetic and vulgar fractions of early societies, is not suited — indeed, rather unfits them — for the involved analysis and complex "problem papers" of later ages.

There is little that in a sketch like this need be said of Lord Althorp's life after the passing of the Reform Act. The other acts of Lord Grey's ministry have nothing so memorable or so characteristic of Lord Althorp that anything need be said about them; nor does any one in the least care now as to the once celebrated mistake of Mr. Littleton in dealing with O'Connell, or Lord Althorp's connection with it.* Parliamentary history is only interesting when it is important constitutional history, or when it illustrates

* See Memoir, Chap. xxii.

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something in the character of some interesting man. But the end of Lord Althorp's public life was very curious. In the November of 1834 his brother Lord Spencer died; and as he was then leader of the House of Commons, a successor for him had to be found.* But William IV., whose Liberal partialities had long since died away, began by objecting to every one proposed, and ended by turning out the ministry,—another event in his reign which our coming republicans will no doubt make the most of; but I have nothing to do with the King and the constitutional question now,—my business is with Lord Althorp. He acted very characteristically: he said that a retirement from office was to him the "cessation of acute pain,"† and never afterwards would touch it again, though he lived for many years. Nor was this an idle affectation, far less indolence. "'You must be aware,' he said once before in a letter to Lord Brougham, 'that my being in office is nothing more or less than misery to me. I am perfectly sure that no man ever disliked it to such a degree as I do; and indeed, the first thing that usually comes into my head when I wake is how I am to get out of it.'"‡ He retired into the country and occupied himself with the rural pursuits which he loved best, attended at quarter-sessions, and was active as a farmer. "Few persons," said an old shepherd, "could compete with my lord in knowledge of sheep;"§ he delighted to watch a whole flock pass, and seemed to know them as if he had lived with them. "Of all my former pursuits," he wrote, just after Lady Althorp's death and in the midst of his grief, "the only one in which I now take any interest is . . . breeding of stock: it is the only one in which I can build castles in the air."‖ And as soon as he could,

* That is to say, Althorp succeeded to his brother's title as Earl Spencer, and had to leave the Commons and enter the House of Lords. — Ed.

† Note at opening of Chap. xxiii., Memoir.

‡ Chap. xxiii., at beginning. § Chap. xxiii. ‖ Chap. x.

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among such castles in the air he lived and died,— no doubt, too, much better for himself than for many of his friends, who long wanted to lure him back to politics. He was wise with the solid wisdom of agricultural England, popular and useful, sagacious in usual things, a model in common duties, well able to advise men in the daily difficulties which are the staple of human life; but beyond this he could not go. Having no call to decide on more intellectual questions, he was distressed and pained when he had to do so. He was a man so picturesquely out of place in a great scene that if a great describer gets hold of him he may be long remembered; and it was the misfortune of his life that the simplicity of his purposes and the trustworthiness of his character raised him at a great conjuncture to a high place for which Nature had not meant him, and for which he felt that she had not meant him.

NOTE TO PAGE 344. — This may refer either to the first or to the second Lord Liverpool; but in either case the inclusion in this list is an error. The first Earl was appointed to his first office just *after* his election to Parliament, and both stations were due to his brilliant college career and a "pull" on Lord Bute's administration. The second Earl was in Parliament ten years (1791-1801) before holding his first office, so that the statement in the text is glaringly the reverse of truth. — ED.

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*MEMOIR OF RIGHT HON. JAMES WILSON.**

(1860.)

PERHAPS some of the subscribers to the *Economist* would not be unwilling to read a brief memoir of Mr. Wilson, even if the events narrated were in no respect peculiar; they might possibly be interested in the biography of an author of whose writings they have read so many, even if the narrative related no marked transitions and no characteristic events. But there were in Mr. Wilson's life several striking changes,—the scene shifts from the manufactory of a small Scotch hatter in a small Scotch town to London, to the Imperial Parliament, to the English Treasury, to the Council Board of India. Such a biography may be fairly expected to have some interest; the life perhaps of no political economist has been more eventful.

James Wilson was born at Hawick, in Roxburghshire, on June 3, 1805. His father, of whose memory he always spoke with marked respect, was a thriving man of business, extensively engaged in the woolen manufacture of that place. He was the fourth son in a family of fifteen children, of whom, however, only ten reached maturity. Of his mother, who died when he was very young, he scarcely retained any remembrance in after life. As to his early years little is now recollected, except that he was a very mild and serious boy, usually successful during school hours, but not usually successful in the play-ground.

As Mr. Wilson's father was an influential Quaker, he was sent when ten years old to a Quaker school at Ackworth, where he continued for four years. At

* Bagehot's father-in-law. This was published as a supplement to the *Economist*, soon after Mr. Wilson's death in 1860.

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that time — it may surprise some of those who knew him in later life to be told — he was so extremely fond of books as to wish to be a teacher; and as his father allowed his sons to choose their line in life, he was sent to a seminary at Earl's Colne in Essex, to qualify himself for that occupation. But the taste did not last long: as we might expect, the natural activity of his disposition soon induced him to regret his choice of a sedentary life. He wrote to Hawick, "I would rather be the most menial servant in my father's mill than be a teacher;" and he was permitted to return home at once.

Many years later, he often narrated that after leaving Earl's Colne he had much wished to study for the Scottish bar, but the rules of the Society of Friends as then understood would not allow his father to consent to the plan. He was sometimes inclined half to regret that he had not been able to indulge this taste, and he was much pleased at being told by a great living advocate that "if he had gone to the bar he would have been very successful"; but at the time there was no alternative, and at sixteen he accordingly commenced a life of business. He did not, however, lose at once his studious predilections: for some years at least he was in the habit of reading a good deal, very often till late in the night. It was indeed then that he acquired almost all the knowledge of books which he ever possessed. In later life he was much too busy to be a regular reader; and he never acquired the habit of catching easily the contents of books, or even of articles, in the interstices of other occupations. Whatever he did, he did thoroughly. He would not read even an article in a newspaper if he could well help doing so; but if he read it at all, it was with as much slow, deliberate attention as if he were perusing a Treasury minute.

At the early age we have mentioned, he commenced his business life by being apprenticed to a

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small hat manufacturer at Hawick; and it is still remembered that he showed remarkable care and diligence in mastering all the minutiæ of the trade. There was indeed nothing of the *amateur* man of business about him at any time. After a brief interval, his father purchased his master's business for him and for an elder brother named William, and the two brothers in conjunction continued to carry it on at Hawick during two or three years with much energy. So small a town, however, as Hawick then was, afforded no scope for enterprise in this branch of manufacture; and they resolved to transfer themselves to London.

Accordingly, in 1824 Mr. Wilson commenced a mercantile life in London (the name of the firm being Wilson, Irwin & Wilson), and was very prosperous and successful for many years. His pecuniary gains were considerable, and to the practical instruction which he then obtained he always ascribed his success as an economist and a financier.

"Before I was twenty years of age," he said at Devonport in 1859, "I was a partner in a firm in London; and I can only say, if there is in my life one event which I regard with satisfaction more than another, it is, that I had then an opportunity of obtaining experience by observation which has contributed in the main to what little public utility I have since been to my country. During these few years I became acquainted — well acquainted — with the middle classes of this country; I also became acquainted in some degree with the working classes; and also, to a great extent, with the foreign commerce of this country in pretty nearly all parts of the world: and I can only say, the information and the experience I thus derived have been to me in my political career of greater benefit than I can now describe."

In 1831 the firm of Wilson, Irwin & Wilson was dissolved by mutual consent; but Mr. Wilson (under the firm of James Wilson & Co.) continued to carry on the same kind of business, and continued to obtain the same success. He began in 1824 with £2,000, the gift of his father, and in 1837 was worth nearly

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£25,000,—a fair result for so short a period, and evincing a steady business-like capacity and judgment; for it was the fruit not of sudden success in casual speculation, but of regular attention during several years to one business. From circumstances which we shall presently state, he was very anxious that this part of his career should be very clearly understood.

During these years Mr. Wilson led the usual life of a prosperous and intellectual man of business. He married,* and formed an establishment suitable to his means, first near his manufactory in London, and afterwards at Dulwich. He took great pleasure in such intellectual society as he could obtain; was specially fond of conversing on political economy, politics, statistics, and the other subjects with which he was subsequently so busily occupied.† Through life it was one of his remarkable peculiarities to be a *very animated* man, talking by preference and by habit on *inanimate* subjects. All the *verve*, vigor, and life which lively people put into exciting pursuits, he put into topics which are usually thought very dry. He discussed the Currency or the Corn Laws with a relish and energy which made them interesting to almost every one. "How pleasant it is," he used to say, "to talk a subject out!" and he frequently suggested theories in the excitement of conversation upon his favorite topics which he had never thought of before, but to which he ever afterwards attached, as was natural, much importance.

* He was married on Jan. 5, 1832, to Miss Elizabeth Preston of Newcastle, and this has given rise to a statement that he was once in business at Newcastle. This is, however, an entire mistake: he was never in business anywhere except at Hawick and London. It may be added that on the occasion of his marriage he voluntarily ceased to be a member of the Society of Friends; for whom he always, however, retained a high respect. During the rest of his life he was a member of the Church of England.—B.

† Among his friends of this period should be especially mentioned Mr. G. R. Porter, of the Board of Trade, the author of "The Progress of the Nation," whose mind he described twenty years later as the most accurate he had ever known.—B.

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The instructiveness of his conversation was greatly increased as his mind progressed and his experience accumulated; but his genial liveliness and animated vigor were the same during his early years of business life as they were afterwards, when he filled important offices of state in England and in Calcutta. Few men can have led a more continuously prosperous and happy life than he did during those years; unfortunately it was not to continue.

In 1836, or thereabouts, Mr. Wilson was unfortunately induced to commence a speculation in indigo, in conjunction with a gentleman in Scotland. It was expected that indigo would be scarce, and that the price would rise rapidly in consequence; such would indeed appear to have been the case for a short period, since the first purchases in which Mr. Wilson took part yielded a profit. In consequence of this success he was induced to try a larger venture,— indeed, to embark most of his disposable capital. Unfortunately, the severe crisis of 1837 disturbed the usual course of all trades; and from its effect or from some other cause, indigo, instead of rising rapidly, fell rapidly. The effect on Mr. Wilson's position may be easily guessed: a very great capitalist would have been able to hold till better times, but he was not. "On Jan. 1," he said at Devonport, "in a given year, my capital was nearer £25,000 than £24,000, and it was all lost." Numerous stories were long circulated, most of them exaggerated and the remainder wholly untrue, as to this period of misfortune in Mr. Wilson's life; but the truth is very simple. As is usual in such cases, various arrangements were proposed and agreed to, were afterwards abandoned, and others substituted for them. A large bundle of papers, carefully preserved by him, records with the utmost accuracy the whole of the history. The final result will be best described in his own words at Devonport, which precisely correspond with the balance sheets and other documents still in existence.

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They are part of a speech in answer to a calumnious rumor that had been circulated in the town:—

"Now, how did I act on this occasion? and this is what this placard has reference to. By my own means alone, I was enabled at once to satisfy in full all claims against me individually, and to provide for the early payment of one-half of the whole of the demands against the firm, consisting of myself and three partners. I was further enabled (or the firm was enabled) at once to assign property of sufficient value, as was supposed, to the full satisfaction of the whole of the remainder of the liabilities. An absolute agreement was made, an absolute release was given to all the partners; there was neither a bankruptcy nor insolvency, neither was the business stopped for one day. The business was continued under the new firm, with which I remained a partner, and from which I ultimately retired in good circumstances. Some years afterwards it turned out that the foreign property which was assigned for the remaining half of the debts of the old firm, of which I was formerly a partner, proved insufficient to discharge them. The legal liability was, as you know, all gone; the arrangement had been accepted, — an arrangement calculated and believed by all parties to be sufficient to satisfy all claims in full: but when the affairs of the whole concern were fully wound up, finding that the foreign property had not realized what was anticipated, I had it, I am glad to say, in my power to place at my banker's — having ascertained the amount — a sum of money to discharge all the remainder of that debt, which I considered morally though not legally due. This I did without any kind of solicitation; the thing was not named to me, and I am quite sure never were the gentlemen more taken by surprise than when a friend of mine waited on them privately in London, and presented each of them with a check for the balance due to them. Now, perhaps I have myself to blame for this anonymous attack, — I probably brought it on myself, for I always felt that if this matter were made public it might look like an act of ostentatious obtrusion on my part; and therefore, when I put aside the sum of money necessary for the purpose, I made a request, in the letter I wrote to my bankers, desiring them as an especial favor that they would instruct their clerks to mention the matter to no one; and in order that it should be perfectly private, I employed a personal friend of my own in the city of London, in whose care I placed the whole of the checks, to wait on those gentlemen and present each of them with a check, and I obtained from him a

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promise, and he from them, not to name the circumstance to any one."

The secrecy thus enjoined was well preserved. Many of the most intimate friends of Mr. Wilson, and his family also, were entirely unacquainted with what he had done, and learnt it only through the accidental medium of an electioneering speech. It may be added, too, that some of those who knew the circumstances, and who have watched Mr. Wilson's subsequent career, believe that at no part of his life did he show greater business ability, self-command, and energy, than at the crisis of his mercantile misfortunes.

It is remarkable that the preface to Mr. Wilson's first pamphlet, on the "Influences of the Corn Laws," is dated March 1, 1839, the precise time at which he was negotiating with his creditors for a proper arrangement of his affairs; and to those who have had an opportunity of observing how completely pecuniary misfortune unnerves and unmans men,—mercantile men perhaps more than any others,—it will not seem unworthy of remark that a careful pamphlet, with elaborate figures, instinct in every line with vigor and energy, should emanate from a man struggling with extreme pecuniary calamity, and daily harassed with the painful details of it.

After 1839 Mr. Wilson continued in business for several years; and with very fair success, considering that his capital was much diminished and that the hat manufacture was in a state of transition. He finally retired in 1844, and invested most of his capital in the foundation and extension of the *Economist*.

These facts prove, as we believe, the conclusion which he was very desirous to make clear,—that though unfortunate on a particular occasion, Mr. Wilson was by no means as a rule unsuccessful in business. He did not at all like to have it said that he was fit to lay down the rules and the theory of business, but not fit to transact business itself; and

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the whole of his life, on the contrary, proves that he possessed an unusual capacity for affairs,—an extraordinary *transacting* ability.

It may, however, be admitted that Mr. Wilson was in several respects by no means an unlikely man to meet, especially in early life, with occasional misfortune. To the last hour of his life he was always sanguine: he naturally looked at everything in a bright and cheerful aspect; his tendency was always to form a somewhat too favorable judgment both of things and men. One proof of this may be sufficient: he was five years Secretary of the Treasury, and he did not leave it a suspicious man.

Moreover, Mr. Wilson's temperament was very active and his mind was very fertile; and though in many parts of business these gifts are very advantageous, in many also they are very dangerous if not absolutely disadvantageous,—frequently they are temptations. Capital is always limited; often it is *very* limited: and therefore a man of business who is managing his own capital has only defined resources, and can engage only in a certain number of undertakings. But a person of active temperament and fertile mind will soon chafe at that restriction: his inventiveness will show him many ways in which money might easily be made, and he cannot but feel that with his energies he would like to make it; if he have besides a sanguine temperament, he will believe that he can make it. The records of unfortunate commerce abound in instances of men who have been unsuccessful because they had great mind, great energy, and great hope, but had not money in proportion. Some part of this description was perhaps applicable to Mr. Wilson in 1839; but exactly how much cannot, after the lapse of so many years, be now known with any accuracy.

Mr. Wilson's position in middle life was by no means unsuitable to a writer on the subjects in which he afterwards attained eminence. He had acquired a

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great knowledge of business through a long course of industrious years; he had proved by habitual success in business that his habitual judgment on it was sound and good. If he had been a man of only ordinary energy and only ordinary ability, he would probably have continued to grow regularly richer and richer; but by a single error, natural to a very sanguine temperament and a very active mind, he had destroyed a great part of the results of his industry. He had a new career to seek: he was willing to expend on it the whole of his great energies; he was ready to take all the pains which were necessary to fit himself for success. When he wrote his first pamphlet, he used to say that he thought "the sentences never would come right"; in later life he considered three leading articles in the *Economist*, full of facts and figures, an easy morning's work, which would not prevent his doing a good deal else too. Mr. Wilson was a finished man of business, obliged by necessity to become a writer on business; perhaps no previous education and no temporary circumstances could be conceived more likely to train a great financial writer and to stimulate his powers.

In 1839 Mr. Wilson published his "Influences of the Corn Laws"; in 1840 the "Fluctuations of Currency, Commerce, and Manufactures"; in 1841 "The Revenue; or, What should the Chancellor do?" In September, 1843, he established the *Economist*. The origin of the latter may be interesting to our readers. Mr. Wilson proposed to the editor of the *Examiner** that he should furnish gratuitously a certain amount of writing to that journal on economical and financial subjects; but the offer was declined, though with some regret, on account of the expense of type and paper: a special paper was therefore established, which proved in the end as important as the *Examiner* itself. From the first, Mr. Wilson was the sole proprietor of the *Economist*, though he

* Albany Fonblanque.

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obtained pecuniary assistance, — especially from the kindness of Lord Radnor. He embarked some capital of his own in it from the first, and afterwards repaid all loans made to him for the purpose of establishing it.

It would not be suitable to the design of this memoir to give any criticism of Mr. Wilson's pamphlets; still less would it become the *Economist* to pronounce in any manner a judgment on itself. Nevertheless, it is a part of the melancholy duty we have undertaken to give some account of Mr. Wilson's characteristic position as a writer on political economy, and of the somewhat peculiar mode in which he dealt with that subject.

Mr. Wilson dealt with political economy like a practical man. Persons more familiar with the literature of [the] science might very easily be found: Mr. Wilson's faculty of reading was small, nor had he any taste for the more refined abstractions in which the more specially scientific political economists had involved themselves. "Political economy," said Sydney Smith, "is become, in the hands of Malthus and Ricardo, a school of metaphysics. All seem to agree what is to be done; the contention is, how the subject is to be divided and defined. *Meddle with no such matters.*"* We are far from alleging that this saying is just, nor would Mr. Wilson have by any means assented to it; but though he would have disavowed it in theory, it nevertheless embodies his instinctive feeling and characteristic practice. He "meddled with no such matters;" though he did not deny the utility of theoretical refinements, he habitually and steadily avoided them.

Mr. Wilson's predominating power was what may be called a "business imagination": he had a great power of conceiving transactions. Political economy was to him the science of buying and selling; and of the ordinary bargains of men he had a very steady

*See Vol. i., page 5.

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and distinct conception. In explaining such subjects he did not begin, as political economists have been wittily said to do, with "Suppose a man upon an island,"* but "What they do in the city is this," "The real course of business is so and so." Most men of business will think this characteristic a great merit; and even a theoretical economist should not consider it a defect. The *practical* value of the science of political economy (the observation is an old one as to *all* sciences) lies in its "middle principles." The extreme abstractions from which such intermediate maxims are scientifically deduced lie at some distance from ordinary experience, and are not easily made intelligible to most persons; and when they *are* made intelligible, most persons do not know how to use them. But the intermediate maxims themselves are not so difficult: they are easily comprehended and easily used; they have in them a practical life, and come home at once to the "business and the bosoms"† of men. It was in these that Mr. Wilson excelled. His "business imagination" enabled him to see "what men did" and "why they did it," "why they ought to do it" and "why they ought not to do it." His very clear insight into the real nature of mercantile transactions made him a great and almost an instinctive master of *statistical selection:* he could not help picking out of a mass of figures those which would tell most; he saw which were really material, he put them prominently and plainly forward, and he left the rest alone. Even now, if a student of parliamentary papers should alight on a return "moved for by Mr. Wilson," he will do well to give to it a more than ordinary attention; for it will be sure to contain something attainable, intelligible, and distinct.

Mr. Wilson's habit of always beginning with the facts, always arguing from the facts, and always

* Lord Houghton. See page 417 of this volume.

† Bacon, Dedication to Essays.

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ending with a result applicable to the facts, obtained for his writings an influence and a currency more extensive than would have been anticipated for any writings on political economy. It is not for the *Economist* to speak of the *Economist;* but we may observe that through the pages of this journal certain doctrines, whether true or false, have been diffused far more widely than they ever were in England before, far more widely than from their somewhat abstract nature we could expect them to be diffused, far more widely than they are diffused in any other country but this. The business-like method and vigorous simplicity of Mr. Wilson's arguments converted very many ordinary men of business, who would have distrusted any theoretical and abstruse disquisition, and would not have appreciated any elaborate refinements. Nor was this special influence confined to mercantile men: it penetrated where it could not be expected to penetrate. The Duke of Wellington was perhaps more likely to be prejudiced against a theoretical political economist than any eminent man of his day: he belonged to the "pre-scientific period," he had much of the impatient practicality incident to military insight, he was not likely to be very partial to "the doctrines of Mr. Huskisson": nevertheless, the Duke early pointed out Mr. Wilson's writings to Lord Brougham as possessing especial practical value; and when the Duke at a much later period was disposed to object to the repeal of the Navigation Laws, Mr. Wilson had a special interview to convince him of its expediency.

Nor is this faculty of exposition by any means a trifling power. On many subjects it is a common saying that "he only discovers who proves"; but in practical politics we may almost say that he only discovers who convinces,—it is of no use to have practical truths received by extraordinary men, unless they are also accepted by ordinary men. Whether Mr. Wilson was exactly a great writer, we will not

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discuss: but he was a great *belief producer;* he had upon his own subjects a singular gift of *efficient* argument, — a peculiar power of bringing home his opinions by convincing reasonings to convincible persons.

The time at which Mr. Wilson commenced his career as an economical writer was a singularly happy one. An economical century has elapsed since 1839. The Corn Laws were then in full force and seemed likely to continue so, — the agriculturists believed in them, and other classes acquiesced in them; the tentative reforms of Mr. Huskisson were half forgotten; our tariff perhaps contained some specimen of every defect, — it certainly contained many specimens of most defects; duties abounded which cramped trade, which contributed nothing to the Exchequer, which were maintained that a minority might believe they profited at the expense of the majority; all the now settled principles of commercial policy were unsettled; the "currency" was under discussion; the Bank of England had been reduced to accept a loan from the Bank of France; capitalists were disheartened and operatives disaffected; the industrial energies which have since multiplied our foreign commerce were then effectually impeded by legislative fetters and financial restraints. On almost all of these restraints Mr. Wilson had much to say.

Upon the Corn Laws, Mr. Wilson developed a theory which was rare when he first stated it, but which was generally adopted afterwards and which subsequent experience has confirmed. He was fond of narrating an anecdote which shows his exact position in 1839. There had just been a meeting of the Anti-Corn-Law League at Manchester, and some speakers had maintained, with more or less vehemence, that the coming struggle was to be one of class against class, inasmuch as the Corn Laws were beneficial to the agriculturists though they were injurious to manufacturers; the tendency of the argument was to set

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one part of the nation against another part. Mr. Wilson was traveling in the North, and was writing in a railway carriage part of the "Influences of the Corn Laws." By chance a distinguished member of the League, whom Mr. Wilson did not know, happened to travel with him, and asked him what he was about. "I am writing on the Corn Laws," said Mr. Wilson: "something in answer to the rubbish they have been talking at Manchester." "You are a bold man," was the reply: "Protection is a difficult doctrine to support by argument." But it soon appeared that Mr. Wilson was the better Free Trader of the two: he held that the Corn Laws were injurious to all classes; that the agriculturists suffered from them as much as the manufacturers; that in consequence it was "rubbish" to raise a class enmity on the subject, for the interest of all classes was the same.

"We cannot too much lament," he says in his "Influences of the Corn Laws," "and deprecate the spirit of violence and exaggeration with which this subject has always been approached by each party, which no doubt has been the chief cause why so little of real truth or benefit has resulted from the efforts of either: the arguments on either side have been supported by such absurd and magnified statements of the influences of those prohibitory laws on their separate interests, as only to furnish each other with a good handle to turn the whole argument into ridicule. It therefore appears to be necessary to a just settlement of this great question, that these two parties should be first reconciled to a correct view of the real influences thus exerted over their interests, and the interests of the country at large; to a conviction that the imaginary fears of change on the one hand, and the exaggerated advantages expected on the other hand, are equally without foundation; that there are in reality no differences in the solid interests of either party; and that *individuals*, *communities*, or *countries* can only be prosperous in proportion to the prosperity of the whole." And he proposed to prove "that the agricultural interest has derived no benefit, but great injury, from the existing laws; and that the fears and apprehensions entertained of the ruinous consequences which would result to this interest by the adoption of a free and liberal policy with respect to the trade in corn are without any foundation;

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that the value of this property, instead of being depreciated in the aggregate, would be rather enhanced, and the general interests of the owners most decidedly enhanced thereby;" and "that while incalculable benefit would arise to the manufacturing interest and the working population generally, in common with all classes of the community, from the adoption of such policy, nothing can be more erroneous than the belief that the price of provisions or labor would on the average be thereby cheapened, but that on the contrary, the tendency would rather be to produce, by a state of generally increased prosperity, a higher average rate of each."

Whatever might be thought in 1839, in 1860 we can on one point have no doubt whatever: the repeal of the Corn Laws has been followed by the exact effect which Mr. Wilson anticipated; whether his argument was right or wrong, the result has corresponded with his anticipation. The agriculturists have prospered more, the manufacturers, the merchants, the operatives, all classes in a word, have prospered more since the Corn Laws were repealed than they ever did before. As to abstract questions of politics there will always be many controversies; but upon a patent contemporaneous fact of this magnitude there cannot be a controversy.

It is indisputable also that for the purposes of the Anti-Corn-Law agitation, Mr. Wilson's view was exceedingly opportune. Mr. Cobden said not long ago (we quote the substance correctly, even if the words are wrong), "I never made any progress with the Corn Law question while it was stated as a question of class against class;" and a careful inquirer will find that such is the real moral of the whole struggle. If it had continued to be considered solely or mainly as a manufacturer's question, it might not have been settled to this hour. In support of this opinion, Mr. Wilson made many speeches at the meetings of the Anti-Corn-Law League, though he had little taste for the task of agitation.

We cannot give even an analysis of Mr. Wilson's arguments, — our space is too brief, — but we will enumerate one or two of the principal points.

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He maintained that under our Protective laws the agriculturists never had the benefit of a high price, and always suffered the evil of a low price. When our crop was scanty, it was necessary to sell the small quantity at a high price, or the farmer could not be remunerated; but exactly at that moment foreign corn was permitted by law to be imported. In consequence, during bad years the farmer was exposed to difficulty and disaster, which were greater because, in expectation of an English demand, large stocks were often hoarded on the Continent, and at once poured in to prevent the home-grower compensating himself for a bad harvest by an equivalent rise of price.

Nor was the farmer better off in very plentiful years. There was a surplus in this country, and that surplus could not be exported, for the price of wheat was always lower abroad than here: the effect is evident. As corn is an article of the first necessity, a certain quantity of it will always be consumed, but more than that quantity will not be readily consumed; a slight surplus is therefore invariably found to lower the price of such articles excessively. In very good years the farmer had to sell his crop at an unremuneratingly low price, while in very bad years he was prevented from obtaining the high price which alone could compensate him for his outlay. Between the effects of the two sorts of years his condition was deplorable, and parliamentary committees were constantly appointed to investigate it.

Mr. Wilson also explained how much these fluctuations in price contracted the home demand for agricultural produce. The manufacturing districts were, he showed, subjected by the Corn Laws to alternate periods of great excitement and great depression. When corn was very cheap, the mass of the community had much to spend on other things; when corn was very dear, they had very little to spend on those things. In consequence, the producers

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of "other things" were sometimes stimulated by a great demand, and at other times deadened by utter slackness; the laboring classes in the manufacturing districts acquired in periods of plenty a certain taste for what to them were luxuries, and in periods of scarcity were naturally soured at being deprived of them; the manufacturers were frequently induced to invest additional capital by sudden augmentations of demand, and were often ruined by its sudden cessation. It was therefore impossible that the manufacturing classes could be steady customers of the agriculturists, for their own condition was fluctuating and unsteady.

Mr. Wilson also showed that if the landed interest was injured by the effects of the Corn Laws, this was of itself enough to injure the manufacturing interests.

"The connection," he wrote, "between the manufacturer and the landed interest in this country is much closer than is generally admitted or believed: not only is the manufacturer dependent on the landed interest for the large portion of his goods which they immediately consume, but also for a very large portion of what he exports to the most distant countries. All commerce is, either directly or indirectly, a simple exchange of the surplus products of one country for those of another. It is therefore a first essential that we should be able to take the cotton of America, the sugar and coffee of India, the silk and teas of China, before they can take our manufactures; and if this be necessary, then must it follow that in proportion to the extent to which we can take their produce will they be enabled to take our manufactures. Therefore, whatever portion of these products is consumed in this country by the landed interest must to that extent enable the manufacturer to export his goods in return; and thus any causes which increase this ability on the part of the landed interest to consume, must give a corresponding additional ability to the manufacturers to export. Every pound of coffee or sugar, every ounce of tea, every article of luxury, the produce of foreign climes, whether consumed within the castles and halls of our wealthiest land-owners or in the humble cottages of our lowliest peasantry, alike represent some portion of the exports of this country. On the other hand, the dependence of the land-owner is no less twofold on the manufacturer and merchant: he is not only dependent upon them for their own

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immediate consumption, but also for the consumption of whatever food enters into the cost price of their goods. Although the English farmer does not export his corn or his other produce in the exact shape and form in which he produces them, they constitute not the less on that account a distinct portion of the exports of this country, and that in the best of all possible forms. Just as much as the manufacturer exports the wool or the silk which enters into the fabrics of those materials does he export the corn which paid for the labor of spinning and weaving them. It would be an utter impossibility that this country could consume its agricultural produce but for our extensive manufacturing population; or that the value of what would be consumed could be near its present rate. If without this aid our agricultural produce were as great as it now is, a large portion would have to seek a market in distant countries: it would then have to be exported in the exact form in which it is produced; the expenses of which, being so large, would reduce very greatly from its value and net price, and the landed interest would be immediately affected thereby. But as it is, the produce of the land is exported in the condensed form of manufactured goods, at a comparatively trifling expense, which secures a high value to it here. Thus, for example, a few bales of silk or woolen goods may contain as much wheat in their value as would freight a whole ship. To this advantage the landed interest is indebted, exclusively, for the very superior value of property and produce in this country to any other; because by our great manufacturing superiority a market is found for our produce over the whole world, conveyed in the cheapest and most condensed form. While the Chinese or Indians buy our cottons, our silks, or our woolens, they buy a portion of the grain and other produce of the land of this country; and therefore the producer here, while indulging in the delicacies or luxuries of Oriental climes, may only be consuming a portion of the golden heads of wheat which had gracefully waved in his own fields at a former day. Is it not, therefore, sufficiently clear that no circumstance whatever can either improve or injure one of these interests without immediately in the same way affecting the other? The connection is so close that it is impossible to separate or distinguish them. Any circumstance which limits our commerce must limit our market for agricultural produce; and any possible circumstance which deteriorates the condition of our agriculturists must deteriorate our commerce, by limiting our imports and consequently our exports. These are general principles, and are capable of extension to the whole world, in all places and at all times; and the same principle as is thus shown

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to connect and combine the different interests of any one country, just as certainly operates in producing a similar effect between different countries: and we ardently hope, ere long, to find not only the petty jealousies between different portions of the same community entirely removed, but that all countries will learn that a free and unrestricted co-operation with each other in matters of commerce can only tend to the general benefit and welfare of all."

We do not say that these propositions were exactly discoveries of Mr. Wilson. During the exciting discussion of a great public question, the most important truths which relate to it are "in the air" of the age; many persons see them or half see them, and it is impossible to trace the precise parentage of any of them. But we do say that these opinions were exactly suited to the broad and practical understanding of Mr. Wilson; that they were very effectively illustrated by him,—more effectively probably than by any other writer; that he thought them out for himself with but little knowledge of previous theories; that they, principally, raised Free Trade from a class question to a national question; that to them, whether advocated by Mr. Wilson or by others, the success of the Anti-Corn-Law agitation was in a great measure owing; that whatever doubt may formerly have been felt, an ample trial has now proved them to be true.

Mr. Wilson's pamphlet entitled "The Revenue; or, What should the Chancellor do?" which attracted considerable attention when it was published in 1841, is worth reading now, though dated so many years ago; for it contains an outline of the financial policy which Sir Robert Peel commenced, and which Mr. Gladstone has now almost completed. This pamphlet, which is not very short (it has twenty-seven moderate pages), was begun as an article for the *Morning Chronicle*, but proved too long for that purpose. It was written with almost inconceivable rapidity,—nearly all, we believe, in a single night,—though its principles and its many figures will bear a critical scrutiny even now.

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In the briefest memoir of Mr. Wilson it is necessary to say something of the currency; but it will not be advisable to say very much. If, however, we could rely on the patience of our readers, we should say a good deal. On no subject, perhaps, did Mr. Wilson take up a more characteristic position. He saw certain broad principles distinctly and steadily, and to these he firmly adhered, no matter what refined theories were suggested or what the opinion of others might be.

Mr. Wilson was a stern bullionist: he held that a five-pound note was a promise to pay five pounds. He answered Sir R. Peel's question, "What is a pound?" with Sir Robert's own answer: he said it was a certain specified quantity of gold metal. He held that all devices for aiding industry by issuing inconvertible notes were certainly foolish, and might perhaps be mischievous. He held that industry could only be really aided by additional *capital*, — by new machines, new instruments, new raw material; that an addition to a paper *currency* was as useless to aid deficient capital as it was to feed a hungry population.

Mr. Wilson held, secondly, that the *sine qua non* — the great prerequisite — to a good paper currency was the maintenance of an adequate reserve by the issuer. He believed that a banker should look at his liabilities as a whole, — the notes which he has in circulation and the deposits he has in his ledger taken together; and should retain a sufficient portion of them (say one-third) in cash, or in something equivalent to cash, in daily readiness to pay them at once. Mr. Wilson considered that bankers might be trusted to keep such a reserve, as they would be ruined sooner or later if they did not; and if the notes issued by them were always convertible at the pleasure of the holder, he believed that the currency would never be depreciated.

He thought, however, that as bank notes must pass from hand to hand in the market, and as in

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practice most persons — most traders especially — must take them in payment whether they wish to do so or not, some special security might properly be required for their payment. He would have allowed any one who liked, to issue bank notes on depositing consols to a sufficient amount, — the amount, that is, of the notes issued, and an adequate percentage in addition.

Lastly, Mr. Wilson believed that the bank-note circulation exercised quite a secondary and unimportant influence upon prices and upon transactions, in comparison with the auxiliary currency of checks and credits, which has indefinitely augmented during the last thirty years. So far from regarding the public as constantly ready for an unlimited supply of bank notes, he thought that it was only in times of extreme panic, when this auxiliary currency is diminished and disturbed, that the bank-notes in the hands of the public either could or would be augmented. He believed that the public only kept in their hands as many notes as they wanted for their own convenience, and that all others were in the present day paid back to the banker immediately and necessarily.

Unfortunately, however, the currency is not discussed in England with very exact reference to abstract principles. The popular question of* every thinker is, "Are you in favor of Peel's Bill, or are you against it?" and this mode of discussing the subject always placed Mr. Wilson in a position of some difficulty. He concurred in the aim of Sir R. Peel, but objected to his procedure. He wished to secure the convertibility of the bank note. He believed that the Act of 1844 indirectly induced the Bank directors to keep more bullion than they would keep otherwise, and in so far he thought it beneficial: but he also thought that the advantages obtained by it were purchased at a needless price; that they might have been obtained much more cheaply; that

* Meaning "*asked* of." — Ed.

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the machinery of the act aggravated every panic; that it tended to fix the attention of the public on bank notes, and so fostered the mischievous delusion that the augmented issue of paper currency would strengthen industry; that it neglected to take account of other forms of credit which are equally important with bank notes; that "*for one week in ten years*"—the week of panic—it created needless and intense apprehension, and so tended to cause the ruin of some solvent commercial men. In brief, though he fully believed the professed object of Sir R. Peel—the convertibility of the bank note—to be beneficial and inestimable, he as fully believed the special means selected by him to be inconvenient and pernicious.

Opinions akin to Mr. Wilson's, if not identical with them, are very commonly now entertained, both by practical men of business and by professional economists; the younger school of thinkers who have had before them the working of the Act of 1844 and the events of 1847 and 1857, and are not committed by any of the older controversies, are especially inclined to them: yet from peculiar causes they have not been so popular as Mr. Wilson's other opinions. His views of finance and of the effect of Free Trade, which were half heresies when he announced them, have now become almost axioms; but the truth of his currency theory is still warmly controverted. The reason is this:—Sir R. Peel's Act is a sort of compromise which is suited to the English people. It was probably intended by its author as a preliminary step. It undoubtedly suits no strict theory; it certainly has great marks of incompleteness: but "it works tolerably well;" if it produces evils at a crisis, "crises come but seldom;" in ordinary times commerce "goes on very fairly." The pressure of practical evil upon the English people has never yet been so great as to induce them to face the unpleasant difficulties of the abstract currency question. Mr. Wilson's

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opinions have therefore never been considered by practical men for a practical object; and it is only when so considered that any opinions of his can be duly estimated. Their essentially moderate character, too, is unfavorable to them; not indeed among careful inquirers, but in the hubbub of public controversy. The only great party which has as yet attacked Sir Robert Peel's bill is that which desires an extensive issue of inconvertible currency; but to them Mr. Wilson was as much opposed as Sir Robert Peel himself. The two watchwords of the controversy are "caution" and "expansion": the advocates of the Act of 1844 have seized on the former, the Birmingham school on the latter; the intermediate, and as we think juster, opinions of Mr. Wilson have had no party cry to aid them, and they have not as yet therefore obtained the practical influence which he never ceased to anticipate and to hope for them. No more need be said upon the currency question,—perhaps we have already said too much; but to those who knew Mr. Wilson well, no subject is more connected with his memory,—he was so fond of expounding it that its very technicalities are, in the minds of some, associated with his voice and image.

But it was not by mere correctness of economical speculation that Mr. Wilson was to rise to eminence. A very accurate knowledge of even the more practical aspects of economical science is not of itself a productive source of income. By the foundation of the *Economist* Mr. Wilson secured for himself, during the rest of his life, competence and comfort; but it was not solely or simply by writing good political economy in it. The organization of a first-rate commercial paper in 1843 required a great inventiveness, and also a great discretion. Nothing of the kind then existed: it was not known what the public most wished to know on business interests; the best shape of communicating information had to be invented in

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detail. The labor of creating such a paper and of administering it during its early stages is very great, and might well deter most men even of superior ability from attempting it. At this period of his life Mr. Wilson used to superintend the whole of the *Economist;* to write all the important leaders, nearly all of the unimportant ones; to make himself master of every commercial question as it arose; to give practical details as to the practical aspects of it; to be on the watch for every kind of new commercial information; to spend hours in adapting it to the daily wants of commercial men. He often worked till far into the morning, and impressed all about him with wonder at the anxiety, labor, and exhaustion he was able to undergo. As has been stated, for some months after the commencement of the *Economist* he was still engaged in his former business; and after he relinquished that, he used to write the City article and also leaders for the *Morning Chronicle,* at the very time that he was doing on his own paper far more than most men would have had endurance of mind or strength of body for. Long afterwards he used to speak of this period as far more exhausting than the most exhausting part of a laborious public life. "Our public men," he once said, "do not know what anxiety means: they have never known what it is to have their own position dependent on their own exertions." In 1843, and for some time afterwards, he had himself to bear extreme labor and great anxiety together; and even his iron frame was worn and tired by the conjunction.

Within seven years from the foundation of the *Economist,* Mr. Wilson dealt effectively and thoroughly with three first-rate subjects, — the railway mania, the famine in Ireland, and the panic of 1847, — in addition to the entire question of Free Trade, which was naturally the main topic of economical teaching in those years. On all these three topics he explained somewhat original opinions, which were novelties if

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not paradoxes then, though they are very generally believed now. To his writings on the railway mania he was especially fond of recurring, since he believed that by his warnings, very effectively brought out and very constantly reiterated, he had "saved several men their fortunes" at that time.

The success of the *Economist*, and the advantage which the proprietor of it would derive from a first-hand acquaintance with political life, naturally led him to think of gaining a seat in Parliament, and an accidental conversation at Lord Radnor's table fixed his attention on the borough of Westbury. After receiving a requisition, he visited the place, explained his political sentiments at much length "from an old cart," and believed that he saw sufficient chances of success to induce him to take a house there. He showed considerable abilities in electioneering, and a close observer once said of him, "Mr. Wilson may or may not be the best political economist in England, but depend upon it he is the *only* political economist who would ever come in for the borough of Westbury." Though nominally a borough, the constituency is half a rural one, much under the influence of certain Conservative squires; the Liberal party were in 1847 only endeavoring to emancipate themselves from a yoke to which they have now again succumbed: except for Mr. Wilson's constant watchfulness, his animated geniality, his residence on the spot, his knowledge of every voter by sight, the Liberal party might never have been successful there. A certain expansive frankness of manner, and a wonderful lucidity in explaining his opinions almost to any one, gave Mr. Wilson great advantages as a popular candidate; and it was very remarkable to find these qualities connected with a strong taste for treating very dry subjects upon professedly abstract principles. So peculiar a combination had the success which it merited: in the summer of 1847 he was elected to serve in Parliament for Westbury.

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Mr. Wilson made his first speech in the House of Commons* on the motion for a committee to inquire into the commercial distress at that time prevalent; and it was considered an act of intellectual boldness for a new member to explain his opinions on so difficult a subject as the currency, especially as they were definitely opposed to a measure supported by such overwhelming parliamentary authority as the Act of 1844 then was. Judging from the report in "Hansard," and from the recollections of some who heard it, the speech was a successful one. It is very clear and distinct, and its tone is very emphatic, without ever ceasing to be considerate and candid: it contains a sufficient account of Mr. Wilson's tenets on the currency,—so good an account, indeed, that when he read it ten years later, in the panic of 1857, he acknowledged that he did not think he could add a word to it. At the time, however, the test of its parliamentary success was not the absolute correctness of its abstract principles, but, to use appropriate and technical language, "its getting a rise out of Peel:" Sir Robert had used some certainly inconclusive arguments in favor of his favorite measure, and Mr. Wilson made that inconclusiveness so very clear that he thought it necessary to "rise and explain," which, on such a subject, was deemed at the moment a great triumph for a first speech.

As might be expected from so favorable a commencement, Mr. Wilson soon established a parliamentary reputation. He was not a formal orator, and did not profess to be so; but he had great powers of exposition, singular command of telling details upon his own subjects, a very pleasing voice, a grave but by no means inanimate manner,—qualities which are amply sufficient to gain the respectful attention of the House of Commons, and Mr. Wilson did gain it. But speaking is but half, and in the great majority of cases by far the smaller half, of the duties of a

* Nov. 30, 1847.

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member of Parliament. Mr. Wilson was fond of quoting a saying of Sir R. Peel's, that "the way to get on in the House of Commons was to take a place and sit there." He adopted this rule himself: was constant in his attendance at the House, a good listener to other men, and always ready to take trouble with troublesome matters. These plain and business-like qualities, added to his acknowledged ability and admitted acquaintance with a large class of subjects upon which knowledge is rare, gave Mr. Wilson a substantial influence in the House of Commons in an unusually short time. The Corn Laws had been repealed, the pitched battle of Free Trade had been fought and won; but much yet remained to be done in carrying out its principles with effective precision, in applying them to articles other than corn, in exposing the fallacies still abundantly current, and in answering the exceptional case which every trade in succession set up for an exceptional Protection. These were painful and complex matters of detail, wearisome to very many persons, and rewarding with no *éclat* those who took the trouble to master and explain them; but Mr. Wilson shrank from no detail. For several years before he had a seat in the House, he had been used to explain such topics in countless conversations with the most prominent Free Traders and in the *Economist;* he now did so in the House of Commons, and his influence correspondingly increased. He was able to do an important work better than any one else could do it; and in English public life, real work rightly done at the right season scarcely ever fails to meet with a real reward.

That Mr. Wilson early acquired considerable parliamentary reputation is evinced by the best of all proofs: he was offered office before he had been six months in the House of Commons, though he had, as the preceding sketch will have made evident, no aristocratic connections; though he was believed to

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be a poorer man than he really was; though writing political articles for newspapers has never been in England the sure introduction to political power which it formerly was in France, though on the contrary it has in general been found a hindrance. In a case like Mr. Wilson's, the prize of office was a sure proof of evident prowess in the parliamentary arena.

The office which was offered to Mr. Wilson was one of the secretaryships of the Board of Control. Mr. Wilson related at Hawick his reluctance to accept it, and his reason: never having given any special attention to Indian topics, he thought it would be absurd and ridiculous in him to accept an office which seemed to require much special knowledge. But Lord John Russell, with "that knowledge of public affairs which long experience insures," at once explained to him that a statesman under our parliamentary system must be prepared to serve the Queen "whenever he may be called on"; and accordingly, that he must be ready to take any office which he can fill, without at all considering whether it is that which he can best fill. After some deliberation, Mr. Wilson acknowledged the wisdom of this advice and accepted the office offered him. Long afterwards, in the speech at Hawick to which we have alluded, he said that without the preliminary knowledge of India which he acquired at the Board of Control, he should never have been able to undertake the regulation of her finances.

When once installed in his office, he devoted himself to it with his usual unwearied industry; and at least on one occasion he had to deal with a congenial topic. The introduction of railways into India was opposed on many grounds, most of which are now forgotten,—such as "the effect upon the native mind," "the impossibility of inducing the Hindoos to travel in that manner," and the like; and more serious difficulties occurred in considering the exact position which the government should assume with

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regard to such great undertakings in such singular circumstances, — the necessity on the one hand, in an Asiatic country where the state is the sole motive power, of the government's doing something, and the danger on the other hand of interfering with private enterprise, by its doing or attempting to do too much. Mr. Wilson applied himself vigorously to all these difficulties: he exercised the whole of his personal influence, and the whole of that which was given to him by his situation, in dissipating the fanciful obstacles which were alleged to be latent in the unknown tendencies of the Oriental mind; while he certainly elaborated — and he believed that he originally suggested — the peculiar form of state guarantee upon the faith of which so many millions of English capital have been sent to develop the industry of India.

Besides discharging the duties of his office, Mr. Wilson represented the Government of the day on several committees connected with his peculiar topics, and especially on one which fully investigated the sugar question. Of the latter, indeed, he became so fully master that some people fancied he must have been in the trade; so complete was the familiarity which he displayed with "brown muscovado," "white clayed," and all other technical terms which are generally inscrutably puzzling to parliamentary statesmen. On a parliamentary committee Mr. Wilson appeared to great advantage. Though sufficiently confident of the truth of his own opinions, he had essentially a fair mind: he always had the greatest confidence that if the facts were probed, the correctness of what he believed would be established, and *therefore* he was always ready to probe the facts to the bottom. He was likewise a great master of the Socratic art of inquiry: he was able to frame a series of consecutive questions which gradually brought an unwilling or a hostile witness to conclusions at which he by no means wished to arrive. His examination in chief, too, was as good as his cross-examination; and the

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animated interest which he evinced in the subject relieved the dreariness which a rehearsed extraction of premeditated answers commonly involves. The examination of Lord Overstone before the Committee of 1848 on Commercial Distress, that of Mr. Weguelin before the Committee on the Bank Acts in 1857, and several of the examinations before the Committee on Life Insurance, of which he was the chairman, may be consulted as models in their respective kinds. And it should be stated that no man could be less overbearing in examination or cross-examination: much was often extracted from a witness which he did not wish to state, but it was always extracted fairly, quietly, and by seemingly inevitable sequence.

Mr. Wilson continued at the Board of Control till the resignation of Lord John Russell's Cabinet in the spring of 1852. He took part in the Opposition of the Liberal party to Lord Derby's Government, and was very deeply interested in the final settlement of the Free Trade question which was effected by the accession of the Protectionist party to office. After a very severe contest, he was re-elected for Westbury in July, 1852; and on the formation of the Aberdeen Government he accepted the office of Financial Secretary to the Treasury, which he continued to hold for five years, until the dissolution of Lord Palmerston's administration in the spring of 1857, and upon his efficiency in which his remarkable reputation as an official administrator was mainly based.

The Financial Secretaryship of the Treasury is by no means one of the most conspicuous offices in the government, and but few persons who have not observed political life closely are at all aware either of its difficulty or of its importance. The office is indeed a curious example of the half-grotesque way in which the abstract theory of our historical Constitution contrasts with its practical working. In the theory of the Constitution — a theory which may still be found in popular compendiums — there is an officer called

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the Lord High Treasurer, who is to advise the Crown and be responsible to the country for all public moneys; in practice there is no such functionary,— by law his office is "in commission." Certain Lords Commissioners are supposed to form a board at which financial subjects are discussed, and which is responsible for their due administration; in practice there is no such discussion and no such responsibility. The functions of the Junior Lords of the Treasury, though not entirely nominal, are but slight. The practical administration of our expenditure is vested in the First Lord of the Treasury, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and the Financial Secretary of the Treasury; and of these three the constitutional rule is, that the First Lord of the Treasury is only officially responsible for decisions in detail when he chooses to interfere in those decisions. Accordingly, when a First Lord, as was the case with Sir R. Peel, takes a great interest in financial questions, the Chancellor of the Exchequer does the usual work of the Secretary of the Treasury, and the Secretary of the Treasury has in comparison nothing to do; but when, as was the case in the Governments of Lord Aberdeen and Lord Palmerston, the Prime Minister takes no special interest in finance, the Chancellor of the Exchequer is very fully employed in the transaction of his own proper business, and an enormous mass of work, some of it of extreme importance, falls to the Secretary of the Treasury. Of late years, the growth of the miscellaneous civil expenditure of the country has greatly augmented that work, great as it was before. In general, it may be said that the whole of the financial detail of our national expenditure is more or less controlled by the Secretary of the Treasury; that much of it is very closely controlled by him; and that he has vast powers of practical discretion, if only he be a man of ability, industry, and courage.

For such an office as this, Mr. Wilson had very peculiar qualifications. He was perfectly sure to be

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right in a plain case; and by far the larger part of the ordinary business of the Government, as of individuals, consists of plain cases. A man who is thoroughly sure to decide effectually and correctly the entire mass of easy, obvious cases, is a safer master of practical life than one eminently skilled in difficult cases, but deficient in the more rudimentary qualification. Nor is the power of certainly deciding plain cases rightly by any means very common, especially among very intellectual men: a certain taint of subtlety, a certain tendency to be wise above the case in hand, mars the practical efficiency of many men whose conversation and whose powers would induce us to expect that they would be very efficient. Mr. Wilson had not a particle of these defects: he struck off each case with a certain sledge-hammer efficiency, and every plain case at least with infallible accuracy.

It might seem overstrained eulogy — a eulogy which he would not have wished — to claim for Mr. Wilson an equally infallible power of deciding complicated cases. As to such cases there will always be a doubt. Plain matters speak for themselves; they do not require a dissertation to elucidate them: every man of business, as soon as he hears the right decision of them, knows that it is the right decision. But with more refined matters it is not so: as to points involving an abstract theory, like that of the currency, there will and must be differences of judgment to the end of time. We would not, therefore, whatever may be our own opinion, claim for Mr. Wilson as infallible a power of deciding difficult questions as he certainly possessed of deciding plain questions; but we do claim for him even in such matters the greatest secondary excellence, if indeed a secondary excellence it be, — Mr. Wilson was perfectly certain to be *intelligible in the most difficult case.* Whether he did right or did wrong must, as we have said, be from the nature of the subject-matter very arguable; but *what* he did and *why* he did it was

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never in doubt for a moment. The archives of the Treasury contain countless minutes from his pen, many of them written with what most men would call rapidity, just while the matter was waiting for decision, and on all sorts of subjects, many of them very complicated ones; yet it may be doubted whether any one of those minutes contains a single sentence not thoroughly and conspicuously clear. The same excellence which has been shown in countless articles in the *Economist* appears in his business-like documents. Wherever his leading articles were written, and under whatever circumstances — and some of the most elaborate of them were written under rather strange circumstances (for he could catch up a pen and begin to write on the most involved topic, at any time, in any place, and as a casual observer would think, without any premeditation) — but wherever and however these articles might be written, it may be safely asserted that they do not contain a sentence which a man of business need read twice over, or which he would not find easily and certainly intelligible. At the Treasury it was the same: however complicated or involved the matter to be decided might be, however much it might be loaded with detail or perplexed by previous controversy, Mr. Wilson never failed to make immediately clear the exact opinion he formed upon it, the exact grounds upon which he formed it, and the exact course of action which he thought should be adopted upon it. Many persons well acquainted with practical life will be disposed to doubt whether extreme accuracy of decision is not almost a secondary merit as compared with a perfect intelligibility: in many cases it may be better to have a decision which every one can understand, though with some percentage of error, than an elaborately accurate decision of which the grounds and reasons are not easily grasped, and a plan of action which from its refined complexity is an inevitable mystery to the greater number of practical

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persons. But putting aside this abstract discussion, we say, without fear of contradiction or of doubt, that Mr. Wilson added to his almost infallible power of deciding plain cases an infallible certainty of being entirely intelligible in complicated cases: men of business will be able to imagine the administrative capacity certain to be produced by the union of extreme excellence in both qualities.

One subsidiary faculty that Mr. Wilson possessed, which was very useful to him in the multifarious business of the Treasury, was an extraordinary memory. On his own subjects, and upon transactions in which he had taken a decisive part, he seemed to recollect anything and everything. He was able to answer questions as to business transacted at the Treasury, after the lapse of months and even of years, without referring to the papers, and with a perfect certainty of substantial accuracy. He would say, without the slightest effort and without the slightest idea that he was doing anything extraordinary, "Such and such a person came to me at the Treasury, and said so and so, and this is what I said to him;" and it is quite possible that he might remember the precise sums of money which were the subject of conversation. A more useful memory for the purposes of life was perhaps never possessed by any one. In the case of great literary memories, such as that of Lord Macaulay and of others, the fortunate possessor has a continued source of pleasurable and constantly recurring recollections; he has a full mind constantly occupied with its own contents, recurring to its long-loved passages from its favorite authors constantly and habitually. But Mr. Wilson never recurred to the transactions in which he had been engaged except when he was asked about them; he lived as little in the past perhaps as is possible for an intellectual person: but the moment the spring was touched by a question or by some external necessity, all the details of the past transaction started

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into his memory completely, vividly, and perfectly. He had thus the advantage of always remembering his business, and also the advantage of never being burdened by it; very few persons can ever have had in equal measure the two merits of a fresh judgment and a full mind.

Mr. Wilson's memory was likewise assisted by a very even judgment. It was easier to him to remember what he had done, because, if he had to do the same thing again, he would be sure to do it in precisely the same way. He was not an intolerant person, but the qualities he tolerated least easily were flightiness and inconsistency of purpose; he had furnished his mind, so to say, with fixed principles, and he hated the notion of a mind which was unfurnished.

All these mental qualities taken together go far to make up the complete idea of a perfect administrator of miscellaneous financial business, such as that of the English Treasury now is. And Mr. Wilson had the physical qualities also: an iron constitution which feared no labor, and was very rarely incapacitated even for an hour by any illness, enabled him to accomplish with ease and unconsciously an amount of work which few men would not have shrunk from. In the country, where his habits were necessarily more obvious, he habitually spent the whole day from eleven till eight, with some slight interval for a short ride in the middle of the day, over his Treasury bag; and as such was his notion of a holiday, it may be easily conceived that in London, when he had still more to do in a morning, and had to spend almost every evening in the House of Commons, his work was greater than an ordinary constitution could have borne. And it was work of a rather peculiar kind. Some men of routine habits spend many hours over their work, but do not labor very intensely at one time; other men of more excitable natures work impulsively, and clear off everything they do by eager efforts in a short time: but Mr. Wilson in some sense

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did both. Although his hours of labor were so very protracted, yet if a casual observer happened to enter his library at any moment, he would find him with his blind down to exclude all objects of external interest, his brow working eagerly, his eye fixed intently on the figures before him, and very likely his rapid pen passing fluently over the paper. He had all the labor of the chronic worker, and all the labor of the impulsive worker too. And those admitted to his intimacy used to wonder that he was never tired: he came out of his library in an evening more ready for vigorous conversation, more alive to all subjects of daily interest, more quick to gain new information, more ready to expound complicated topics, than others who had only passed an easy day of idleness or ordinary exertion.

By the aid of this varied combination of powers, Mr. Wilson was able to grapple with the miscellaneous financial business of the country with very unusual efficiency. Most men would have found the office work of the Secretary of the Treasury quite enough; but he was always ready rather to take away labor and responsibilities from other departments than to throw off any upon them. Nor was his efficiency confined to the labors of his office: the Financial Secretary of the Treasury has a large part of the financial business of the House of Commons under his control, and is responsible for its accurate arrangement. The passing a measure through the House of Commons is a matter of detail; and in the case of the financial measures of the Government, a large part of this — the dullest part, and the most unenvied — falls to the Secretary of the Treasury. He is expected to be the right hand of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in all the most wearisome part of the financial business of the House of Commons; and we have the best authority for stating that under two Chancellors of the Exchequer, very different from one another in many respects, Mr. Wilson performed this

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part of his duties with singular efficiency, zeal, and judgment.

The Financial Secretary of the Treasury is likewise expected to answer all questions asked in the House as to the civil estimates, — a most miscellaneous collection of figures, as any one may satisfy himself by glancing at them. Mr. Wilson's astonishing memory and great power of lucid exposition enabled him to fulfill this part of his duty with very remarkable efficiency. He gave the dates and the figures without any note; and his exposition was uniformly simple, emphatic, and intelligible, even on the most complicated subjects. The great rule, he used to say, was to answer exactly the exact question: if you attempted an elaborate exposition, collateral issues were necessarily raised, a debate ensued, and the time of the House was lost.

Mr. Wilson's mercantile knowledge and mercantile sympathies were found to be of much use in the consolidation of the customs in 1853; and he took great interest in settling a scheme for the payment of the duties in checks instead of bank notes, by which the circulation has been largely economized and traders greatly benefited. During the autumn of 1857, his long study of the currency question and his first-hand conversancy with the business of the City were valuable aids to the Administration of the day, in the anxious responsibilities and rapidly shifting scenes of an extreme commercial crisis. It would be impossible to notice the number of measures in which he took part as Secretary of the Treasury, and equally impossible to trace his precise share in them: that office insures to its holder substantial power, but can rarely give him legislative fame.

On two occasions during his tenure of office at the Treasury, Mr. Wilson was offered a different post. In the autumn of 1856 he was offered the Chairmanship of Inland Revenue, a permanent office of considerable value then vacant; which he declined because he did

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not consider the income necessary, and because (what some people would think odd) it did not afford sufficient occupation. It was a "good pillow," he said, "but he did not wish to lie down." The second office offered him was the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade, in 1855; which would have been a step to him in official rank, but which would have entailed a new election, and he did not feel quite secure that the electors of Westbury would again return him. He did not, however, by any means wish for the change; as the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade, though nominally superior, is in real power far inferior to the Secretaryship of the Treasury.

In the general election of 1857, Mr. Wilson was returned for Devonport, for which place he continued to sit till his departure for India. He went out of office on the dissolution of Lord Palmerston's Administration in the spring of 1858, and took an active part in the Liberal Opposition to Lord Derby's Government; though it may be remarked that he carefully abstained from using the opportunities afforded him by his long experience at the Treasury, of harassing his less experienced successors in financial office by needless and petty difficulties.

On the return of the Liberal party to power, Mr. Wilson was asked to resume his post at the Treasury; but he declined, as after five years of laborious service he wished to have an office of which the details were less absorbing. He accepted, however, the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade,—an office which is not in itself attractive, but which gives its possessor a sort of claim to be President of the Board at the next vacancy. The office of President is frequently accompanied by a seat in the Cabinet; and Mr. Wilson's reputation on all subjects connected with trade was so firmly established that in his case it would have been practically impossible to pass him over, even if it had been wished. He had, however, secured so firm a position in official circles by his

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real efficiency, that the dispensers of patronage were, as he believed, likely to give him whatever he desired as soon as the exigencies of party enabled them to do so.

He had not been long in office before he had good reason for thinking that he would be offered by the Government the office of Financial Member of the Council of India, under very peculiar circumstances. There had never before been such an officer. One member of Council had since 1833 been always sent out from England; but he had always been a lawyer, and his functions were those of a jurist and a regulative administrator, not those of a financier. The mutiny of the Sepoys in 1857 had, however, left behind it a deficit with which the financiers of India did not *seem* to be able to cope, and which a cumbrous financial system did not give them the best means of vanquishing. There was a general impression that some one with an English training and English habits of business would have a better chance of overcoming the most pressing difficulty of India than any one on the spot; and there was an equally general impression that if any one were to be sent from England to India with such an object, Mr. Wilson was the right person, — he united high financial reputation, considerable knowledge of India acquired at the Board of Control, tried habits of business, [and] long experience at the English Treasury, to the sagacious readiness in dealing with new situations which self-made men commonly have, but which is commonly wanting in others.

On personal grounds Mr. Wilson was disinclined to accept the office. He was on the threshold of the Cabinet here. He was entitled by his long tenure of office at the Treasury to a pension which would merge in the salary of Indian Councillor. The emoluments of the latter office were not necessary to him: his life was very heavily insured for the benefit of his family; though he had never, during his tenure

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of office at the Treasury, been connected directly or indirectly with any kind of commercial undertaking (the *Economist* alone excepted), some investments which he made in land and securities, entirely beyond the range of politics, had been very fortunate; since the year 1844 everything of a pecuniary kind in which he had been concerned had not only prospered, but remarkably prospered,—he felt himself sufficiently rich to pursue the career of prosperous usefulness and satisfied ambition that seemed to be before him here. There was no consideration of private interest which could induce him to undertake anxious and dangerous duties in India; he even ran some pecuniary risk in leaving this country, as it was possible that in the vicissitudes of newspaper property the *Economist* might again need the attention of its proprietor and founder. On public grounds, however, he believed that it was his duty to accept the office; he took a keen interest in Indian finance, believed that the difficulties of it might be conquered, and thought that in even *attempting* to conquer them he would be doing the greatest and most lasting public service that it was in *his* power to accomplish.

He accordingly accepted the office of Financial Member of the Council of India, and proceeded to make somewhat melancholy arrangements for leaving this country. He broke up his establishment here, bade farewell to his constituents at Devonport and to the inhabitants of his native place, attended some influential public meetings in towns deeply interested in the commerce of India, and on Oct. 20, 1859, left England,—as it proved, forever.

Of Mr. Wilson's policy in India it would not be proper to give more than a very brief sketch here. That policy is still fresh in the memory of the public; it has been very frequently explained and discussed in the *Economist;* it is still being tried; and though he was fully persuaded of the expediency of his measures, he would not have wished for too warm a

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eulogy of them while they are as yet untested by the event. In almost the last letter which the present writer received from him, there was a sort of reprimand for permitting this journal to draw too great an attention to his plans, and to ascribe the merit of them too exclusively to him and too little to the Government of which he was a member.

On his arrival in India he found that the Governor-General was on a tour in the Upper Provinces of India, and before doing any business of importance at Calcutta he traveled thither. This journey he thought very advantageous, because it gave him a great insight into the nature of the country, and enabled him to consult the most experienced revenue officers of many large districts on their respective resources, and on the safest mode of making those resources available to the public. He was much struck with the capabilities of the country, and wrote to England in almost so many words that "it was a fine country to *tax*." On the other hand, however, he was well aware of the difficulty of his task. The only two possible modes of taxation are direct and indirect, and in the case of India there is a difficulty in adopting either: if we select indirect taxation and impose duties on consumable commodities, the natives of India meet us by declining to consume, — their wants are few, and they will forego most of them if a tax can be evaded thereby; on the other hand, if we adopt in India a direct tax on property or income, there is great difficulty in finding out what each man's property or income is. In England we trust each person to tell us the amount of his income, but even here the results are not wholly satisfactory; and it would be absurd to fancy that we can place as much reliance upon the veracity of Orientals as upon that of Englishmen.

These difficulties, however, Mr. Wilson was prepared to meet. On Feb. 18, 1860, he proposed his Budget to the Legislative Council at Calcutta, and the

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reception given to it by all classes was remarkably favorable. He announced, indeed, a scheme of heavy taxation; but the Indian public had been living for a considerable time under a sentence of indefinite taxation, and they were glad to know the worst. Anything distinct was better than vague suspense; and as usual, Mr. Wilson contrived to make his meaning *very* distinct. His bearing also exercised a great influence over the Anglo-Indian public. In England he had been remarkable among official men for his constant animation and thorough naturalness of manner; in his office he was as much himself as at a dinner-table or in the House of Commons, — he had no tinge of supercilious politeness or artificial blandness. In any new scene of action — especially in such a scene as British India — these qualities were sure to tell beneficially: plain directness and emphatic simplicity were the external qualities most likely to be useful at Calcutta, and these were Mr. Wilson's most remarkable qualities.

The principal feature of Mr. Wilson's Budget was the income tax, which he avowedly framed after the English fashion. It is true that but little reliance can perhaps be placed on the statements of Orientals as to their wealth; it is very possible that the complicated machinery of forms and notices which is in use here may not be applicable in India. All this Mr. Wilson well knew; but he thought that our Indian subjects should have an opportunity of stating their income before they were taxed upon it. If they should state it untruly, or should decline to state it, it might be necessary to tax them arbitrarily; but he did not think it would be decent — that it would be civilized — to begin with an arbitrary assessment. By the Income Tax Act which he framed, it is enacted that other modes may be substituted if in any instance the English mode of assessment should prove inapplicable; in other words, if our Oriental fellow-subjects will not tell us the truth when they are

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asked, we must tax them as best we can, and they cannot justly complain of unfairness and inequality,—*we* would have been mathematically just, if *they* had given us the means.

The reception of Mr. Wilson's Budget was universally favorable until the publication of the minute of Sir C. Trevelyan, which, as was inevitable, produced a serious reaction. Heavy taxation can never be very pleasant; and in the Presidency of Madras, Sir Charles gave the sanction of the Government—of the highest authority the people saw—to the hope that they would not be taxed. The prompt recall of Sir Charles, however, did much to convince the natives of the firm determination of the English Government,* and Mr. Wilson hoped that the ordeal of criticism through which his measures had to pass would ultimately be favorable to them; it certainly secured them from the accusation of being prepared in haste, but it purchased this benefit at the loss to the public of much precious time, and to Mr. Wilson of precious health. Of the substance of this minute it is sufficient to say that its fundamental theory, that additional taxation of any sort was unnecessary in India, has scarcely been believed by any one except its author; almost every one has deemed it too satisfactory to be true.

On another point Mr. Wilson's Budget has been criticized in England, though not in India: it has been considered to be a Protective Budget. The mistake has arisen from not attending to what that Budget is. The changes made by Mr. Wilson in the import duties were two: "The first was a reduction from twenty to ten per cent. upon a long list of articles, including haberdashery, millinery, and hosiery, all part of the cotton trade; the second was an increase in the duty upon cotton yarn from five to ten per cent., thus creating a uniform tariff of ten per cent." † Of these two, it is plain the reduction from twenty per cent. to ten was not a change that would

*See note, page 402. †*Economist* of Sept. 8, 1860, page 977.

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operate as a Protection to Indian industry; and the increase of the duty on yarn has a contrary tendency. Yarn is an earlier, cloth a later, stage of manufacture; and in Mr. Wilson's own words, "it is a low duty on yarn and a high duty on cloth that encourages native weaving." For the effect of the general system of high customs duties in India, Mr. Wilson is not responsible, but his predecessors; what *he* did has no Protective tendency.

If the income tax should, as may be fairly hoped, become a permanent part of the financial system of India, it will serve for a considerable period to keep Mr. Wilson's name alive there: so efficient an expedient must always attract the notice of the public, and must in some degree preserve the remembrance of the minister by whom it was proposed. Mr. Wilson, however, undertook two other measures of very great importance. One of these has been frequently described as the introduction into India of the English system of public accounts; but it would be more truly described as the introduction of a rational system of public accounts. There are three natural steps in national finance, which are certainly clearly marked in our English system, but which have a necessary existence independent of that recognition. These three are — first, the estimate of future expenditure; secondly, what we call the Budget, — that is, the official calculation of the income by which the coming expenditure is to be defrayed; thirdly, the audit which shows what the expenditure has been and how it has been met. The system of finance which Mr. Wilson found in India neglected these fundamental distinctions, — there were no satisfactory estimates of future expenditure, and no satisfactory calculation of future income; in consequence, the calculations of the official departments have been wrong by millions sterling, and English statesmen have felt great difficulty not only in saying how the deficit was to be removed, but likewise in ascertaining what the amount of the

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deficit was. At the time of his death, Mr. Wilson was eagerly occupied in endeavoring to introduce a better system.

Mr. Wilson will likewise be remembered as the first minister who endeavored to introduce into India a Government paper currency. On March 3, 1860, he introduced into the Legislative Council an elaborate plan for this purpose, which, with a slight modification by Sir C. Wood, — curious in the theory of the currency, but practically not very important, — will speedily, it is probable, be the fundamental currency law, the "Peel's Act" of British India.

The exact mode in which Mr. Wilson regarded these great objects will perhaps be better explained by two extracts from his latest letters than by any other means. On July 4 he wrote to a friend: —

"Firmness and justice are the only policy for India: no vacillation, or you are gone. They like to be governed; and respect an iron hand, if it be but equal and just. I have, I think, more confidence than ever that the taxes will be established and collected, and without disturbance; but the task is still an enormous one. I must retrench yet at least three and a half millions, and get the same sum from my new taxes to make both ends meet. I am putting the screw on very strongly; but rather by an improved policy in army and police than in reductions of salaries and establishments, which cannot be made. I have set myself *five* great points of policy to introduce and carry out: —

"1. To extend a system of sound taxation to the great trading classes, who hitherto have been exempted, though chiefly benefited by our enormously increased civil expenditure.

"2. To establish a paper currency.

"3. To reform and remodel our financial system, by a plan of annual Budgets and estimates, with a Pay Department to check issues and keep them within the authorized limits, and an effective audit.

"4. A great police system of semi-military organization, but usually of purely civil application, which, dear though it be, will be cheaper by half a million than our present wretched and expensive system; and by which we shall be able to reduce our native army to at least one-third, and by which alone we can utilize the natives as an arm of defense without the danger of congregating idle organized masses.

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"5. Public works and roads, with a view to increased production of cotton, flax, wool, and European raw materials.

"The four first I have made great progress in; the latter must follow. But you will call it 'a large order'; however, you have no idea of the increased capacity of the mind for undertaking a special service of this kind when removed to a new scene of action, and when one throws off all the cares of engagements, less or more trivial, by which one is surrounded in ordinary life, and throws one's whole soul into such a special service, and particularly when one feels assured of having the power to carry it out. I cannot tell you with what ease one determines the largest and gravest question here compared with in England; and I am certain that the more one can exercise real power, there is by far the greater tendency to moderation, care, and prudence."

In a second letter, dated July 19, he wrote to the same friend from Barrackpore:—

"The Indian Exchequer is a huge machine. The English Treasury is nothing to it for complexity, diversity, and remoteness of the points of action. Our great enemies are time and distance; and with all our frontier territories, there is scarcely a day passes that we have not an account of some row or inroad. It is a most unwieldy empire to be governed on the principle of forcing civilization at every point of it. One day it is the frontier of Scinde and a quarrel with our native chiefs, which our Resident must check; another, it is an intrigue between Herat and Cabul, with a report of Russian forces in the background; the next, there is a raid upon our Punjab frontiers to be chastised; then come some accounts of coolness or misunderstanding or unreasonable demands from our ally in Nepaul; then follow some inroads from the savage tribes which inhabit the mountains to the rear of Assam and up the Burrampootra; then we have reported brawls in Burmah and Pegu, and disputes among the hill tribes whose relations to the British and the Burmah governments are ill defined; then we have Central India, with our loyal chiefs Scindiah and Holkar, independent princes with most turbulent populations, which could not be kept in order a day without the presence of British troops and of the Governor-General's Agent. Besides all these, we have among ourselves a thousand questions of internal administration, rendered more difficult by the ill-defined relations between the supreme and the subordinate governments, — the latter always striving to encroach, the former to hold its own;* hence, questions do not come

* An official of a subordinate government would exactly reverse this. — Ed.

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before us simply on their merits, but often as involving these doubtful rights. Then we have courts of justice to reform, as well as all other institutions of a domestic kind not to reform alone, but to extend to new territories. Then we have a deficit of £7,000,000, and had a government teaching the people that all could be done without new taxes. But unfortunately, all except the taxes are a present certainty, — *they* are a future contingency. What will they yield? I have no precise knowledge: I think from three to four millions a year when in full bloom; this financial year not more than a million.

"I have now got a Military Finance Commission in full swing, a Civil Finance Commission also going; I am reorganizing the Finance, Pay, and Accountant-General's Department in order to get all the advantage of the English system of estimates, Pay Office, and Audit: and this with as little disturbance of existing plans as possible. The latter is a point I have especially aimed at. On the whole, and almost without an exception, I have willing allies in all the existing offices; no attempt that I see is anywhere made to thwart or impede.

"You can well understand, then, how full my hands are, if to all these you add the new currency arrangements; you will not then wonder that my health has rendered it necessary to come down here for a day or two to get some fresh air."

It will be observed that in the last extract Mr. Wilson alludes to his impaired health. For some time after his arrival in India he seemed scarcely to feel the climate; he certainly did not feel it as much as might have been anticipated. He worked extremely hard; scarcely wrote a private letter, but devoted the whole of his great energies to the business around him. His letters for a considerable time abound with such expressions as "Notwithstanding all my hard work, my health is excellent." From the commencement of the rainy season at Calcutta, however, he ceased to be equally well; his state began to arouse the apprehensions of experienced observers, and he was warned that he should retire for a short time to a better climate. He would not, however, do so until his financial measures had advanced sufficiently far for him to leave them. His position was a very peculiar one: in general, if one administrator

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leaves his post, another is found to fill it up; but Mr. Wilson was a unique man at Calcutta, — he was sent there because he had certain special qualifications which no one there possessed, and accordingly he had no one to rely on in his peculiar functions save himself. His presence on the spot was likewise very important: the administration of a department can be frequently transacted by letter, but the organization of new departments and new schemes requires the unremitting attention of the organizer, — the impulse of his energy. The interest, too, which Mr. Wilson took in public business was exceptionally great; and no one who knew him well would suppose that *he* would leave Calcutta while necessary work, or what he deemed so, was to be done there.

Nor was labor the sole trial to which his constitution was exposed. The success of measures so extensive as his must ever be a matter of anxious doubt until the event decides; and in his case there were some momentary considerations to aggravate that anxiety. There was no experience of such taxation as he had proposed, and the effect of it must therefore be difficult to foresee; moreover, for a brief period, a famine seemed to be imminent in Upper India, which must have disturbed the whole operation of his financial schemes. In his debilitated state of health, this last source of anxiety seemed much to weigh upon him.

About the middle of July he went for a week to Barrackpore, near Calcutta. The change was, however, too slight; and as might be expected, he returned to Calcutta without any material benefit. From that time the disease gradually augmented, and on the evening of Aug. 2 he went to bed never to rise from it again. For many days he continued to be very ill, and his family experienced the usual alternations of hope and fear. He was quite aware of his critical state, and made all necessary arrangements with his habitual deliberation and calmness.

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Lord Canning saw him on the 9th for the last time, and was much struck with the change which illness had made in him. He believed that he saw death in his face, and was deeply impressed with the vivid interest which even in the last stage of weakness he took in public affairs, with his keen desire for the success of his plans, and with the little merit which he was disposed to claim for his own share in them.

It was hoped that he would be strong enough to bear removal, and it was intended to delay the mail steamer for a few hours to take him to sea, — the usual remedy at Calcutta for diseases of the climate; but when the time came, there was no chance that his strength would be adequate to the effort. During the whole of the 11th he sank rapidly, and at half past six in the evening he breathed his last.

The mourning in Calcutta was more universal than had ever been remembered. He had not been long in India, but while he had been there he filled a conspicuous and great part. He had done so much that there were necessarily doubts in the minds of some as to the expediency of part of it; no such doubts, however, were thought of now.. "That he should have come out to die here!" "That he should have left a great English career *for this!*" were the phrases in every one's mouth. The funeral was the largest ever known at Calcutta; it was attended by almost the entire population, from the Governor-General downwards, and not a single voice, on any ground whatever, dissented from the general grief.

Very little now remains to be said. A few scattered details, some of them perhaps trivial, must complete this sketch.

Mr. Wilson's face was striking, though not handsome. His features were irregular, but had a peculiar look of mind and energy, while a strongly marked brow and very large eyebrows gave to all who saw him an unfailing impression of massive power and firm determination.

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Mr. Wilson's moral character in its general features resembled his intellectual. He was not a man of elaborate scruples and difficult doubts, and he did not much like those who were. His conscientiousness was of a plain but very practical kind; he had a single-minded rectitude which went straight to the pith of a moral difficulty,—which showed him what he ought to do. On such subjects he was somewhat intolerant of speculative reasoning: "The common sense is so and so," he used to say, and he did not wish to be plagued with anything else.

In one respect his manner did not uniformly give a true impression of him. He always succeeded in conveying his meaning, in stating what he wished to have done and why he wished it; he never failed to convince any one of his inexhaustible vigor and his substantial ability: but he sometimes did fail in giving a true expression to his latent generosity and real kindliness. He shrank almost nervously from the display of feeling, and sometimes was thought by casual observers to feel nothing when in reality he was much more sensitive than they were. Another peculiarity which few persons would have attributed to him aided this mistake: it may seem strange in a practiced Secretary of the Treasury, but he used to say that through life he had suffered far more from shyness than from anything else. Only very close observers could have discovered this, for his manner was habitually impressive and unfaltering; but common acquaintances, sometimes even persons who saw him on business, erroneously imputed to unthinking curtness that which was due in truth to nervous hesitation.

With his subordinates in office he was, however, very cordial. He discussed matters of business with them, listened carefully to their suggestions or objections, and very frequently was guided by their recommendations. He had no paltry desire to monopolize the whole credit of what might be done. He probably

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worked harder than any Secretary of the Treasury before or since; but so far from depressing those below him, he encouraged their exertions, co-operated with them, and was ever ready to bear hearty testimony to the tried merit of efficient public servants. He was also quite willing to forget the temporary misunderstandings which are so apt to occur among earnest men who take different views of public affairs: he was eminently tolerant, — though he had almost always a strong conviction of his own, he never felt the least wish to silence discussion. Believing that his own opinions were true, he was only the more confident that the more the subject was discussed, the more true they would be found to be. Few men ever transacted so much important business with so little of the pettiness of personal feeling.

In the foregoing sketch Mr. Wilson has of necessity been regarded almost exclusively as a public man; but his private life has many remarkable features, if it were proper to enlarge on them. His enjoyment of simple pleasures, of society, of scenery, of his home, was very vivid. No one who saw him in his unemployed moments would have believed that he was one of the busiest public men of his time: he never looked worn or jaded, and always contributed more than his share of geniality and vivacity to the scene around him. Like Sir Walter Scott,* he loved a bright light; and the pleasantest society to him was that of the cheerful and the young.

The universal regret which has been expressed at Mr. Wilson's death is the best tribute to his memory. It has been universally felt that on his special subjects, and for his peculiar usefulness, he was a "finished man"; and in these respects he has left few such behind him. The qualities which he had the opportunity of displaying were those of an administrator and a financier; but some of those who knew him best believed that he only wanted an adequate

* Perhaps a slip for "Sydney Smith": see Vol. i., page 84. — Ed.

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opportunity to show that he had also many of the higher qualities of a statesman, and it was the feeling that he would perhaps have such an opportunity which reconciled them to his departure for India. As will have been evident from this narrative, he was placed in many changing circumstances, and in the gradual ascent of life was tried by many increasing difficulties; but at every step his mind grew with the occasion. We at least believe that he had a great sagacity and a great equanimity, which might have been fitly exercised on the very greatest affairs; but it was not so to be.

The intelligence of Mr. Wilson's death was formally communicated by the Indian to the Home Government in the following dispatch:—

"*To the Right Honorable* SIR CHARLES WOOD, *Bart., G. C. B., Secretary of State for India.*

"SIR:—The painful task is imposed upon us of announcing to her Majesty's Government the death of our colleague, the Right Honorable James Wilson.

"2. This lamentable event took place on the evening of Saturday, the 11th, after an illness of a few days.

"3. We inclose a copy of the notification by which we yesterday communicated the mournful intelligence to the public. The funeral took place at the time mentioned in the notification; and the great respect in which our lamented colleague was held, was evinced by a very large attendance of the general community, in addition to the public officers, civil and military.

"4. We are unable adequately to express our sense of the great loss which the public interests have sustained in Mr. Wilson's death. We do not doubt, however, that this will be as fully appreciated by her Majesty's Government as it is by ourselves, and as we have every reason to believe it will be by the community generally throughout India.

"5. But we should not satisfy our feelings in communicating this sad occurrence to her Majesty's Government, if we did not state our belief that the fatal disease which has removed Mr. Wilson from amongst us was in a great degree the consequence of his laborious application to the duties of his high position, and of his conscientious determination not to cease from the prosecution of the important measures of which he had charge until their success

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was insured. Actuated by a self-denying devotion to the objects for which he came out to this country, Mr. Wilson continued to labor indefatigably long after the general state of his health had become such as to cause anxiety to the physician who attended him; and it was within a few days only after the income tax had become law, and when, at the earnest request of his medical adviser, he was preparing to remove from Calcutta for the remainder of the rainy season, that he was seized with the illness that has carried him off.

"6. It is our sincere conviction that this eminent public servant sacrificed his life in the discharge of his duty.

"We have, etc.,

"CANNING.

"H. B. E. FRERE.

"C. BEADON.

"FORT WILLIAM, Aug. 13."

NOTE TO PAGE 392. — Sir Charles Trevelyan was governor of the Presidency of Madras, a member for which sat in the Supreme Legislative Council at Calcutta; and sent a minute to that member opposing any increase of taxation, on the ground that low taxes stimulate production just as low duties stimulate consumption. It was thought dangerous to excite popular discontent by allowing this deliverance to become public, and the minute was only permitted to be shown confidentially to the members of the Council; whereupon Sir Charles, indignant at being "gagged," had it published in the Madras newspapers. He was removed, but after Mr. Wilson's death was appointed to the latter's place (in 1863), which however he resigned on account of ill health the following year. — ED.

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THE PRINCE CONSORT.

(1861.)

So much has, ere this, been said upon the life and character of Prince Albert, that scarcely anything now remains except to join very simply and plainly in the regret and sympathy which have been everywhere expressed by all classes of the nation,—the low as well as the high. A long narrative of a simple career would now be wholly needless, for our contemporaries have supplied many such; and any protracted eulogy would be unsuitable both to our business-like pages and to the simple character of him whom we have lost.

If our loss is not, as has been extravagantly said, the greatest which the English nation could have sustained, it is among the most irreparable. Our parliamentary Constitution in some sense renews itself, or tends to do so: as one old statesman leaves the scene, a younger one comes forward, in the vigor of hope and power, to fill his place; when one great orator dies, another commonly succeeds him. The opportunity of the new aspirant is the departure of his predecessor; on every vacancy some new claimant—many claimants, probably, strive with eager emulation to win it and to retain it. Every loss is in a brief period easily and fully repaired. Even too in the hereditary part of our Constitution, most calamities are soon forgotten: one monarch dies and another succeeds him; a new court, a new family, new hopes and new interests, spring up and supersede those which have passed away. What was, is forgotten; what is, is seen. But now we have the old court

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without one of its mainstays and principal supports. The royal family of last week is still (and without change) the royal family of to-day; but the father of that family is removed. For such a loss there is not, in this world, any adequate resource or any complete compensation: in no rank of life can any one else be to the widow and children what the deceased husband and father would have been; in the court as in the cottage, such loss must not only be grief now, but perplexity, trouble, and perhaps mistake hereafter.

The present generation, at least the younger part of it, have lost the idea that the court is a serious matter: everything for twenty years has seemed to go so easily and so well that it has seemed to go of itself. There is no such thing in this world,—everything requires anxiety and reflection and patience; and the function of the court, though we easily forget it when it is well performed, keeps itself much in our remembrance when it is ill performed. Old observers say that some of the half-revolutionary discontent in the times preceding the Reform Bill was attributable to the selfish apathy and decrepit profligacy of George IV. The Crown is of singular importance in a divided and contentious free state, because it is the sole object of attachment which is elevated above every contention and division; but to maintain that importance it must create attachment. We know that the Crown now does so fully; but we do not adequately bear in mind how much rectitude of intention, how much judgment in conduct, how much power of doing right, how much power of doing nothing, are requisite to unite the loyalty and to retain the confidence of a free people.

Some cynical observers have contrasted the unlimited encomiums of the last week with the "cold observance" and very measured popularity of Prince Albert during his life; they remember the public hisses of 1855, and perhaps recall many hints and whispers of politics that have passed away: but the most

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graphic of our contemporaries have found nothing to record of Prince Albert so truly characteristic as this change, — his circumstances, and perhaps his character, forbade him to attempt the visible achievements and the showy displays which attract momentary popularity. Discretion is a quality seldom appreciated till it is lost; and it was discretion which Prince Albert eminently possessed.

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WHAT LORD LYNDHURST REALLY WAS.

(1863.)

A GREAT phenomenon has passed away from English public life. Not long since, Lord Lyndhurst observed:—"My Lords, I well remember the breaking out of the French revolution in 1789, the death of Louis XVI., and the course of the consequent events."* There is not perhaps a conspicuous public man now in Europe who could say this; certainly there is none in England. The picturesque features of Lord Lyndhurst's mind and character made the phenomenon still more striking. The characteristic of his intellect was the combination of great force and great lucidity: every sentence from him was full of light and energy. His face and brow were perhaps unrivaled in our time for the expression of pure intellect, and he preserved the physical aptitude for public oratory to an old age when most men are scarcely fit for mere conversation. To the very extremity of a protracted life—and this is very rare—he both looked, and was, a great man: the intellect was undimmed, and the power of expression hardly abated. There is no such man left.

It is very natural that such a man should have lived till his career should be half a myth or a legend. Few indeed of those who during the last few years gazed on that remarkable face had any distinct conception of the life which had been led by the person they saw. The singular vigor of his

*Hansard thus:—"My Lords, I am old enough to remember the whole history of the Revolutionary War, and of the war which succeeded it with the Empire of France" (speech on the "Naval Reserve," May 1, 1860).

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conversation charmed those who resorted to him, and they were led to believe that a man who talked so very well could hardly have acted very ill. The lives which have been put forth in the newspapers — carefully prepared, like those of most old men — are merely panegyrics; for once, the physical vigor of a long old age has redeemed in public estimation the errors and vices of a long life. But it is not so that history should be written; it is in no strain of panegyric that an impartial observer can review the career of Lord Lyndhurst.

The beginning of the public life of Lord Lyndhurst was towards the end of the long reign of the Tory party. Sir George Lewis justly observed that the Tories in 1815 had an immense balance of popularity arising from the successful issue of the great war, and that they managed to spend it most completely before 1830.* They governed, as all Conservatives even would now admit, in precisely the wrong spirit: they governed not in the spirit of Mr. Pitt, but in the spirit of Lord Eldon. They maintained not only the main institutions of the country, which were acceptable and popular, but also the minutest abuses which in the course of years had clung to those institutions. They connected the name of the Tory party with every petty abuse and misdemeanor throughout the country; they would alter nothing, and they would let nothing be altered. When public meetings were convened to express public opinion, the organs of the Government cried out "sedition," and talked as if a "French revolution" were going to break out here. By this stupid — there is no milder epithet that is fitting — and narrow-minded policy, the Tories caused the outburst of public opinion which carried the Reform Bill. Their best organs have admitted as much of late years: "A few more drops," said the *Quarterly Review* not long since, "of Eldonine, and

*Second paragraph of No. vii. in "Administrations of Great Britain," reprinted from *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. cx., review of Lord John Russell's Fox.

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we should have had the People's Charter." The Tory party kept the nation in such tight and painful fetters that it was driven wild, and rose and broke them: "if the Tories will permit no improvement," so went the national idea, "we must have an end of Toryism."

All this was excusable and natural in men like Lord Eldon: he had been a Tory from his youth, and he had been confirmed in Toryism by the events of the French revolution. When the peace came, and a new generation sprang up, he was too old to change his creed; he honestly believed that it was necessary to resist every innovation, no matter of what sort, and to maintain everything, no matter of what kind. In Lord Eldon such conduct was natural and excusable; but it was not natural in a young man of great intelligence in the next generation, — able young men well knew that this illiberal Toryism was out of place and an anachronism. It was in 1818, when the effects of this system were beginning to be plainly visible, that Lord Lyndhurst chose to connect himself with it. He did so under circumstances of great suspicion: he had held — loosely, we apprehend — some sort of ultra-Liberal opinions; he had been, at any rate, in the habit of talking in that style at young men's parties and the circuit mess. He was a Liberal if he was anything; and charges continued to be made against him for many years of having deserted his principles.

It is indeed utterly inconceivable that Lord Lyndhurst should have believed in Toryism such as Toryism was in 1818: he would have no title to fame if he had believed in it. His claim is an intellectual claim: he is said, and justly said, to have had when he chose to exert it an intellect of the highest cultivation, more fitted than almost any other in his time for the perception of the truth; a first-rate judicial mind, with culture and experience far transcending

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the ordinary judicial range. It is inconsistent with this claim that he should really have been on the wrong side in all the important questions of his time. It is absurd to say that the greatest political intellect of his time—and some such claim as this might be justly made for Lord Lyndhurst—really believed that the Catholics should not be emancipated; that the Corn Laws should be maintained; that there should be no reform in Parliament; that the narrow system of 1818 was a perfect or even an endurable system. We do not mean to charge him with acting contrary to his principles: that charge was made years ago, but was the exaggerated charge of political opponents, who saw that there was something to blame, but who in their eagerness and haste overdid their accusation. The true charge is, that he had no principles, that he did not care to have opinions. If he had applied his splendid judicial faculties to the arguments for Free Trade or for Catholic Emancipation, he would soon enough have discovered the truth; but he never did apply them. There is a story of a clever young official who said it was "inconvenient to keep opinions"; and this exactly expresses Lord Lyndhurst's life and sentiments. They tell a story, which may be true or false but is certainly characteristic, of what he said as to the act which bears his name, forbidding a man to marry a deceased wife's sister. The real object of that act was to please certain particular people who had married their sisters-in-law, and as it stands to this day it legalizes all antecedent marriages. As it was originally brought in, it legalized subsequent marriages also: persons conversant with the clergy, and other strict people, represented to Lord Lyndhurst that there would be an outcry against this; he replied, "Put it the other way, then,—forbid the future marriages: I am sure I do not care which way it is." He wanted to serve a temporary purpose, and he did so always. He regarded politics as a game, to be played first for himself and then for

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his party; he did not act contrary to his opinion, but he did not care to form a true opinion.

This was the explanation of his joining the Tories. Not to join them was poverty then, to join them was wealth; they were firmly fixed in office. As the satirist then sang, —

> "Naught's constant in the human race,
> Except the Whigs not getting into place."

As was the pleasant habit of that time, the Government picked out Mr. Copley, a clever young lawyer, and gave him a seat in Parliament; he accepted it, though he had no more formed opinion that Toryism was true than he had that Mohammedanism was true. He took up the opinions of the existing Government and advocated them; and to the end of his life would have thought it "nonsense and rubbish" to act otherwise.

Probably, however, he would have acted more profitably if he had acted more conscientiously: it really was a case when honesty was the best policy. If he had paid a fair attention to the subjects of his time, he would have been on what all parties now admit to be the right side; if he had had a sincere wish to improve and benefit mankind, he would have been forward in the ranks of the Liberal party, who were then employed in doing so. The chances of life were various, but most likely he would have had his reward: the Whigs wanted a first-rate judge who was also a first-rate politician; during their long period of power they have never possessed one. The Whigs have been in power, roughly speaking, five-and-twenty years out of the last thirty: if Lord Lyndhurst had been their leader instead of the Tory leader, he would have had far more of what he valued, — more power and influence, more wealth, and greater station; he would have been among the foremost of the winners instead of being among the

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foremost of the losers. There was nothing which he would have liked so much: there was nothing which he appreciated so much as success in the game of political life, nothing that he despised and detested like want of success.

It is pleasant to turn to a more favorable topic. Many duties Lord Lyndhurst may have neglected or despised or disowned; but one duty, and a neglected one, he performed better perhaps on the whole than any [other] man in his generation,—he had the most disciplined intellect of his time. There is in every one of his productions evidence not only of natural sinewy strength, but of careful culture and intellectual gymnastic. Lord Brougham tells a story of finding him occupied over the integral calculus for amusement's sake, years ago. Every line of his speeches tells how well he understood and how well he acted on the manly principles of Greek oratory. Few men led a laxer life; few men, to the very end of their life, were looser in their conversation: but there was no laxity in his intellect,—everything there was braced and knit. Great oratory is but a transitory art; few turn even to the best speeches of the past, and even the best of these are so clogged with the detail of the time that they are dull and wearisome to a hasty posterity. Few will recur to Lord Lyndhurst's speeches; but those who do so will find some of the best, if not the very best, specimens in English of the best manner in which a man of great intellect can address and influence the intellects of others. Their art, we might almost say their merit, is of the highest kind, for it is concealed: the words seem the simplest, clearest, and most natural that a man could use; it is only the instructed man who knows that he could not himself have used them, and that few men could.

Such was the great man whom we have just buried: great in power, but not great in the use of power; a politician, not a statesman; a man of small

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principle and few scruples. Of him, far more truly than of Burke, it may be said that he "to party gave up what was meant for mankind."* He played the game of life for low and selfish objects, and yet, by the intellectual power with which he played it, he redeemed that game from its intrinsic degradation.

*Goldsmith's "Retaliation."

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MR. COBDEN.

(1865.)

TWENTY-THREE years ago,—and it is very strange that it should be so many years,—when Mr. Cobden first began to hold Free Trade meetings in the agricultural districts, people there were much confused: they could not believe the Mr. Cobden they saw to be "the Mr. Cobden that was in the papers." They expected a burly demagogue from the North, ignorant of rural matters, absorbed in manufacturing ideas, appealing to class prejudices,—hostile and exciting hostility; they saw "a sensitive and almost slender man, of shrinking nerve, full of rural ideas, who proclaimed himself the son of a farmer, who understood and could state the facts of agricultural life far better than most agriculturists, who was most anxious to convince every one of what he thought the truth, and who was almost more anxious not to offend any one." The tradition is dying out; but Mr. Cobden acquired, even in those days of Free Trade agitation, a sort of agricultural popularity. He excited a personal interest; he left what may be called a *sense* of himself among his professed enemies. They were surprised at finding that he was not what they thought; they were charmed to find that he was not what they expected; they were fascinated to find what he was. The same feeling has been evident at his sudden death,—a death at least which was to the mass of occupied men sudden. Over political Belgravia—the last part of English society Mr. Cobden ever cultivated—there was a sadness: every one felt that England had lost an individuality which it could never have again,

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which was of the highest value, which was in its own kind altogether unequaled.

What used to strike the agricultural mind as different from what they fancied, and most opposite to a Northern agitator, was a sort of playfulness; they could hardly believe that the lurking smile, the perfectly magical humor which they were so much struck by, could be that of a "Manchester man." Mr. Cobden used to say, "I have as much right as any man to call myself the representative of the tenant farmer, for I am a farmer's son, and the son of a Sussex farmer:"* but agriculturists keenly felt that this was not the explanation of the man they saw; perhaps they could not have thoroughly explained, but they perfectly knew that they were hearing a man of singular and most peculiar genius, fitted as if by "natural selection" for the work he had to do, and not wasting a word on any other work or anything else, least of all upon himself.

Mr. Cobden was very anomalous in two respects. He was a sensitive agitator. Generally, an agitator is a rough man of the O'Connell type, who says anything himself and lets others say anything; "You peg into me and I will peg into you, and let us see which will win," is his motto. But Mr. Cobden's habit and feeling were utterly different: he never spoke ill of any one; he arraigned principles, but not persons. We fearlessly say that after a career of agitation of thirty years, not one single individual has — we do not say a valid charge, but a producible charge, a charge which he would wish to bring forward against Mr. Cobden. You cannot find the man who says, "Mr. Cobden said this of me, and it was not true." This may seem trivial praise, and on paper it looks easy; but to those who know the great temptations of actual life it means very much. How would

* "I have as good a right as any honorable gentleman in this House to identify myself with the order of farmers: I am a farmer's son. . . . I am the son of a Sussex farmer" (Feb. 17, 1843).

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any other great agitator — O'Connell or Hunt or Cobbett — look, if tried by such a test? Very rarely, if even ever, in history has a man achieved so much by his words, been victor in what was thought at the time to be a class struggle, and yet spoken so little evil as Mr. Cobden. There is hardly a word to be found, perhaps, even now, which the Recording Angel would wish to blot out. We may on other grounds object to an agitator who lacerates no one; but no watchful man of the world will deny that such an agitator has vanquished one of life's most imperious and difficult temptations.

Perhaps some of our readers may remember as vividly as we do a curious instance of Mr. Cobden's sensitiveness. He said at Drury Lane Theater, in tones of feeling — almost of passion — curiously contrasting with the ordinary coolness of his nature, "I could not serve with Sir Robert Peel;" after more than twenty years, the curiously thrilling tones of that phrase still live in our ears. Mr. Cobden alluded to the charge which Sir Robert Peel had made, or half made, that the Anti-Corn-Law League and Mr. Cobden had, by their action and agitation, conduced to the actual assassination of Mr. Drummond, his secretary, and the intended assassination of himself, Sir Robert Peel.* No excuse or palliation could be made for such an assertion except the most important one, that Peel's nerves were as susceptible

*Drummond was assassinated by an insane Scotchman, MacNaghten, Jan. 21, 1843. The debate in which Cobden attacked Peel as "individually responsible" for the distress of the country, and Peel held it as a personal "menace," was on Feb. 17 (see besides Hansard, Peel's and Cobden's Speeches; Knight's "History of England," viii. 500; etc.). Cobden's speech at Drury Lane Theater, quoted from in the text, was probably at the weekly meeting of the League on March 15 (the first at Drury Lane, — they met there till May 3, when it was refused them and they hired Covent Garden), but these words are not given in the *Examiner's* report, and the speech is not included in his collected Speeches. Brougham had made the same charge against the League, and Cobden scarified him also for it; but indeed it was part of the common stock of accusations by the League's enemies at the time, as similar charges always are against any great popular movement. — ED.

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and sensitive as Mr. Cobden's; but the profound feeling with which Mr. Cobden spoke of it is certain, — he felt it as a man feels an unjust calumny, an unfounded stain on his honor.

Mr. Disraeli said on Monday night* (and he has made many extraordinary assertions, but this is about the queerest), "Mr. Cobden had a profound reverence for tradition." If there is any single quality which Mr. Cobden had not, it was traditional reverence; but probably Mr. Disraeli meant what was most true, that Mr. Cobden had a delicate dislike of offending other men's opinions. He dealt with them tenderly: he did not like to have his own creed coarsely attacked, and he did — he could not help doing — as he would be done by; he never attacked any man's creed coarsely or roughly, or in any way except by what he in his best conscience thought the fairest and justest argument.

This sensitive nature is one marked peculiarity in Mr. Cobden's career as an agitator; and another is, that he was an agitator for men of business.

Generally speaking, occupied men, charged with the responsibilities and laden with the labor of grave affairs, are jealous of agitation: they know how much may be said against any one who is responsible for anything; they know how unanswerable such charges nearly always are, and how false they easily may be. A capitalist can hardly help thinking, "Suppose a man was to make a speech against my mode of conducting my own business, how much he would have to say!" Now, it is an exact description of Mr. Cobden, that by the personal magic of a single-minded practicability he made men of business abandon this objection; he made them rather like the new form of agitation; he made them say, "How business-like.

* April 3, 1865 (Cobden died April 2): — "Though formed in the tumult of popular opinions, with which he identified himself, there was in his character a vein of reverence for tradition which — " etc. (Hansard).

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how wise!—just what it would have been right to do."

Mr. Cobden, of course, was not the discoverer of the Free Trade principle; he did not first find out that the Corn Laws were bad laws: but he was the most effectual of those who discovered how the Corn Laws were to be repealed, how Free Trade was to change from a doctrine of the "Wealth of Nations" into a principle of tariffs and a fact of real life. If a thing was right, to Mr. Cobden's mind it ought to be done; and as Adam Smith's doctrines were admitted on theory, he could not believe that they ought to lie idle, that they ought to be "bedridden in the dormitory of the understanding."*

Lord Houghton once said, "In my time political-economy books used to begin, 'Suppose a man on an island.'" Mr. Cobden's speeches never began so; he was altogether a man of business speaking to men of business. Some of us may remember the almost arch smile with which he said, "The House of Commons does not seem quite to understand the difference between a cotton mill and a print work:"† it was almost amusing to him to think that the first assembly of the first mercantile nation could be, as they were and are, very dim in their notions of the most material divisions of their largest industry. It was this evident and first-hand familiarity with real facts and actual life which enabled Mr. Cobden to inspire a curiously diffused confidence in all matter-of-fact men: he diffused a kind of "economical faith"; people in those days had only to say "Mr. Cobden said so," and other people "went and believed it."

Mr. Cobden had nothing in the received sense classical about his oratory; but it is quite certain that Aristotle, the greatest teacher of the classical art of

* "Dormitory of the *soul*."—Coleridge, "Aids to Reflection," Aphorism 1.

† "—as the House did not seem to have a very clear knowledge of the distinction between a cotton mill and a print work" (March 4, 1842, on the "Truck System").

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rhetoric, would very keenly have appreciated his oratory. This sort of economical faith is exactly what he would most have valued, what he most prescribed: he said "a speaker should convince his audience that he was a likely person to know;"* this was exactly what Mr. Cobden did. And the matter-of-fact philosopher would have much liked Mr. Cobden's habit of "coming to the point"; it would have been thoroughly agreeable to his positive mind to see so much of clear obvious argument. He would not indeed have been able to conceive a "League Meeting": there has never perhaps been another time in the history of the world when excited masses of men and women hung on the words of one talking political economy. The excitement of these meetings was keener than any political excitement of the last twenty years, keener infinitely than any which there is now. It may be said, and truly, that the interest of the subject was Mr. Cobden's felicity, not his mind; but it may be said with equal truth that the excitement was much greater when he was speaking than when any one else was speaking,—by a kind of keenness of nerve, he said the exact word most fitted to touch not the bare abstract understanding, but the quick individual perceptions of his hearers.

We do not wish to make this article a mere panegyric: Mr. Cobden was far too manly to like such folly. His mind was very peculiar, and like all peculiar minds had its sharp limits. He had what we may call a "supplementary understanding"; that is, a bold, original intellect, acting on a special experience, and striking out views and principles not known to or neglected by ordinary men. He did not possess the traditional education of his country, and did not understand it; the solid heritage of transmitted knowledge has more value, we believe, than he would have accorded to it. There was too a defect in business faculty, not identical, but perhaps not altogether

* "Rhetoric," ii. 4, viii. 6, etc.,—in substance.

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without analogy. The late Mr. James Wilson used to say, "Cobden's administrative power I do not think much of; but he is most valuable in counsel,—always original, always shrewd, and not at all extreme." He was not altogether equal to meaner men in some beaten tracks and pathways of life, though he was far their superior in all matters requiring an original stress of speculation, an innate energy of thought.

It may be said, and truly said, that he has been cut off before his time: a youth and manhood so spent as his well deserved a green old age, but so it was not to be. He has left us, quite independently of his positive works, — of the repeal of the Corn Laws, of the French treaty, — a rare gift, the gift of a unique character: there has been nothing before Richard Cobden like him in English history, and perhaps there will not be anything like him. And his character is of the simple, emphatic, picturesque sort which most easily, when opportunities are given as they were to him, goes down to posterity. May posterity learn from him! Only last week we hoped to have learned something ourselves. But

> "What was before us we know not,
> And we know not what shall succeed."*

*Matthew Arnold, "The Future."

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LORD PALMERSTON.

(1865.)

LORD PALMERSTON only died on Wednesday, and already the world is full of sketches and biographies of him. It is very natural that it should be so, for he counted for much in English politics: his personality was a power, and it is natural that every one should at his death seek to analyze what we used to have and what we have now lost. We will do so; but remembering how often the tale has been told, we will be as brief as possible.

Lord Derby happily said that he was born in the "pre-scientific" period; and Lord Palmerston was so born, or even more. He was, it is true, a boarder at Dugald Stewart's, and we believe transcribed at least a part of the lectures on political economy of that philosopher, lately published; but the combined influence of interior nature and the surrounding situation was too strong,—his real culture was that of living languages and the actual world. He was the best French scholar among his contemporaries; so much so that when he went to Paris in 1859, the whole society, which fancied he was an imperious and ignorant Englishman, was charmed by the grace of his expression. His English in all his speeches was sound and pure, and in his greater efforts almost fastidiously correct. The feeling for language, which is one characteristic of a great man of the world, was very nice in Lord Palmerston, and very characteristic.

It was from the actual knowledge of men—from close specific contact—that Lord Palmerston derived

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his data. We have heard grave men say with surprise, "He always has an anecdote to cap his argument; he begins, 'I knew a man once.'" And the anecdotes had no trace of the garrulity of age: they were real illustrations of the matter in hand; they were the chosen instances of a man who thought in instances. Some think, as the philosophers say, by "definition," others by "type"; Lord Palmerston, like an animated man used to the animated world, thought in examples, and hardly realized abstract words.

It was because of this, that in international matters — the only ones for which in youth he cared — he was a great practical lawyer: he knew what hardly any one knows, — the subject-matter; he knew the cases with which during a long life he had to deal. To most men, international law is a matter of precedent and words; to him it was a matter of personal adventure and reality. Some people not unqualified to judge have said that his opinion on such matters was as good as any law officer's: he might not have studied Vattel or Wheaton so closely as some, but he had — what is far better — followed with a keen interest the actual and necessary practice of present nations.

It was this sort of worldly sympathy and worldly education which gave Lord Palmerston his intelligibility. He was not a common man, but a common man might have been cut out of him; he had in him all that a common man has, and something more. And he did not at all despise, as some philosophers teach people to do, the common part of his mind: he was profoundly aware that the common mass of plain sense is the great administrative agency of the world; and that if you keep yourself in sympathy with this you win, and if not you fail. Sir George Lewis used to say that just as Demosthenes declared action to be the first, second, and third thing in a statesman, so intelligibility is the first, second, and third thing in

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a constitutional statesman;* it is to us certainly the first, second, and third thing in Lord Palmerston. This is not absolutely eulogistic. No one resembled less than Lord Palmerston the fancied portrait of an ideal statesman, laying down in his closet plans to be worked out twenty years hence: he was a statesman for the moment; whatever was not wanted now, whatever was not practicable now, whatever would not take now, he drove quite out of his mind. The prerequisites of a constitutional statesman have been defined as "the powers of a first-rate man and the creed of a second-rate man";† the saying is harsh, but it is expressive. Lord Palmerston's creed was never the creed of the far-seeing philosopher; it was the creed of a sensible and sagacious but still commonplace man. His objects were common objects; what was uncommon was the will with which he pursued them.

No man was better in action, but no man was more free from the pedantry of business. People, he has been heard to say, have different minds. "When I was a young man, the Duke of Wellington made an appointment with me at half-past seven in the morning, and some one asked me, 'Why, Palmerston, how will you keep that engagement?' 'Oh,' I said, 'of course, the easiest thing in the world: I shall keep it the last thing before I go to bed.'" He knew that the real essence of work is concentrated energy, and that people who really have that in a superior degree by nature are independent of the forms and habits and artifices by which less able and active people are kept up to their labors.

Lord Palmerston prided himself on his foreign policy, on which we cannot now pronounce a judgment; but it is not upon this that his fame will rest. He had a great difficulty as a foreign minister: he had no real conception of any mode of life except that

* No. iv. in "Administrations of Great Britain" (page 253), reprinted from *Edinburgh Review*, Vol. cvii., review of "Court of George IV."

† Bagehot's own words,—see page 7, lines 10, 11.

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with which he was familiar. His idea — his fixed idea — was, that the Turks were a highly improving and civilized race; and it was impossible to beat into him their essentially barbaric and unindustrial character. He would hear anything patiently, but no corresponding ideas were raised in his mind. A man of the world is not an imaginative animal, and Lord Palmerston was by incurable nature a man of the world: keenly detective in what he could realize by experience; utterly blind, dark, and impervious to what he could not so realize. Even the best part of his foreign policy was alloyed with this defect. The mantle of Canning had descended on him, and the creed and interests of Canning: he was most eager to use the strong influence of England to support free institutions,— to aid "the Liberal party" was the phrase in those days everywhere on the Continent; and no aim could be juster and better,— it was the best way in which English strength could be used. But he failed in the instructed imagination and delicate perception necessary to its best attainment: he supported the Liberal party when it was bad and the country unfit for it, as much as when it was good and the nation eager for it. He did not define the degree of his sympathy, or apportion its amount to the comparative merits of the different claims made on it. According to the notions of the present age, too, foreign policy should be regulated by abstract or at least comprehensive principles; but Lord Palmerston had no such principles. He prided himself on his exploits in Europe, but it is by his instincts in England that he will be remembered.

It was made a matter of wonder that Lord Palmerston should begin to rule the House of Commons at seventy; and there is no doubt that he was very awkward at first in so ruling it. Sir James Graham, and other judges of business management, predicted that "the thing would fail," and that a new Government would have to be formed. But the truth is,

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that though he had been fifty years in the House of Commons, Lord Palmerston had never regularly attended it, and even still less attended to it. His person had not been there very much, and his mind had been there very little; he answered a question on his own policy, or made a speech, and then went away. Debate was not to him, as to Mr. Pitt or Mr. Gladstone, a matter of life and pleasure; Mr. Canning used to complain, "I can't get that three-decker Palmerston to bear down." And when he was made leader of the House, it came out that he hardly knew, if he did know, the forms of the House. But it was a defect of past interest, not a defect of present capacity: he soon mastered the necessary knowledge; and as soon as he had done so, the sure sagacity of his masculine instincts secured him an unconquerable strength.

Something we wished to say more on these great gifts, and something too might be said as to the defects by which they were alloyed; but it is needless. Brevity is as necessary in a memorial article as in an epitaph. So much is certain, we shall never look upon his like again; we may look on others of newer race, but his race is departed. The merits of the new race were not his merits; their defects are not his. England will never want statesmen, but she will never see in our time such a statesman as Viscount Palmerston.

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THE EARL OF CLARENDON.

(1870.)

THE late Lord Clarendon belonged to a very small and very remarkable class of peers. There are many peers — as the lawyers — who have no birth but who worked hard in their youth, and there are also many who have the highest birth and have never worked the least; there are many who have earned rank, and many who have inherited rank: but it is rare to find a peer who inherits his rank, and yet who has known what it is to earn his bread. Of eminent peers there is perhaps hardly more than one now living of whom this is true: Lord Salisbury has indeed a right to feel that circumstances cannot ruin him; that a revolution may come, that the House of Lords may perish, that estates may be confiscated, but that his abilities as a popular writer will earn him his living as they did before. Though in a different way, Lord Clarendon was of this class also: when he was in the excise office in Dublin, and all through his younger life, there was but a distant probability of his coming to the title; and he had to work really for his bread. And the training of his youth was probably of use to him always: to the* week of his death he was a curiously unremitting worker. With somewhat peculiar hours and times, he got through more work probably in the twenty-four hours than most administrators of his time, and finished it all with care and accuracy. There were

* I have canceled the word "last" from the text here. — ED.

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none of the gratuitous blunders and hurried errors which mostly characterize the work of one who is much praised for great activity; everything was carefully considered and carefully executed.

Perhaps it is not unconnected with this praise, that there was an indescribable repose about Lord Clarendon's manner and appearance. No one who saw him, in his later years at least, would have ever thought him a specially active man. He seemed a very calm, sensible, and singularly courteous old gentleman; and it would scarcely have occurred to a casual observer that he was an exceedingly indefatigable worker. But those who have watched the habits of men of business, in politics and out of it, will have seen many cases in which a still and quiet man who does not seem to be doing much, and probably is talking of something quite different, has in matter of fact and at the week's end accomplished much more than the "rushing mighty wind,"—the very energetic man who is never idle or at rest, and who has no thought but his office business. A still man like Lord Clarendon has time to think what he will do; and most incessant men are apt to act before they have thought, and therefore land where they should not, or else lose half their time in sailing back again.

It was perhaps the result of Lord Clarendon's early training that he always took great interest in commerce, and whenever he had the power, steadily used the agency of the Foreign Office for its advantage. He was much too thoroughly on a level with his time to do this by an aggressive foreign policy: the old notion of fighting for foreign markets, or of intriguing for their exclusive use, had so completely died out that he cannot be praised for being exempt from it; Lord Clarendon used only the legitimate functions for trade purposes. He was especially eager for the collection of actual statistical information by our foreign consuls and embassies; the commencement

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of their reports on these subjects, and the establishment of the statistical department of the Board of Trade, were largely owing to his great interest in these objects.

That Lord Clarendon showed great originality as a Foreign Minister will hardly be contended; and some, among whom the present writer is to be counted, have grave doubts whether extreme originality in such an office is either possible or desirable. Examples of great inventiveness are rare in all business, but they are particularly rare in those kinds of business which require the constant consent of many persons; and of these the English foreign policy is one. Not, indeed, that at the moment of taking his decision, the Foreign Minister is particularly trammeled: in great cases he must consult the Prime Minister and perhaps the Cabinet; but if these stood by themselves, having the power of peculiar information, he could probably mostly carry with him the minds of men occupied with near and pressing questions, and not in general ready to master disagreeable and uncertain detail as to remote topics and strange events. But the great obstacle to originality is the English nation. In a free country a minister can only do that which the nation is prepared for; and if he tries to do more, the nation will disown him. Within special limits, and on minor questions, he can give an effectual guidance and control the decision; but beyond those limits, and on vital matters, he has no power at all. The subtle power which we call "opinion," which is the product of so long a history and the offspring of so many causes, hems him in, and he cannot do as he would; but if he stays, he must act as he would not. An irritable, far-seeing originality is commonly a vice in business, and in a Foreign Minister it would be an intolerable nuisance; it was exactly because Lord Clarendon had a delicate instinct of the limits of his power, that he was so truly useful and so really influential.

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In one respect we are not inclined to join in the universal praise which within the last few days Lord Clarendon has received. He has been greatly praised as a writer, and no doubt he wrote not only with great facility but with much elegance; but there is one great difficulty about almost all his dispatches. Each sentence is clear, and no word brings you to a stop: but yet after a few paragraphs a careful reader suddenly pauses to think where he is and what he has assented to; and even when he reads the paragraphs over again, he will not always find it easy to be sure that he sees the limits of what was meant and the limits of what was not meant. The limpid flow of delicate words takes him steadily on; but where at any precise instant he is, he cannot be very confident. For the former intercourse of foreign courts, this sort of style had immense advantages: it gave no offense, and having no marked sentences, left no barbed words for after irritation. And in Lord Russell we had a warning of the evils of the opposite style. He wrote as he used to speak in the House of Commons: with a certain cold acumen he "pitched" (there is no less familiar word adequate) "into" the foreign courts, as he used to "pitch into" Sir Robert Peel; and not being used to parliamentary plainness, the foreign courts did not like it. Lord Russell hardly conducted a foreign controversy in which the extreme intelligibility of his words did not leave a sting behind them. Of Lord Clarendon the very contrary may be said: he scarcely ever left a sting, never an unnecessary one. But on the other hand, Lord Russell's dispatches, hard and unpleasant as they often are, never left any one in doubt as to their precise meaning: if they did mislead some foreign courts, it was because they could not understand that a minister would blurt out all his meaning in that *gauche* manner; but to a common reader they are as plain as words can make them. And as in the present day, great dispatches, being published, are

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really addressed to whole nations of common readers as well as to small courts of special training, they ought to be so written as to combine the gentle suavity that suits the one with the unmistakable plainness which is essential to the other. It was exactly the gliding urbanity of Lord Clarendon's style which pleased the courts while it perplexed the common people.

But we do not need now to dwell at length on a point so subordinate. It is much for a man of Lord Clarendon's standing to have written nearly perfectly in the old style; it is no ground for serious blame to him that he did not invent a new style. He will be remembered by posterity as a minister singularly suited to the transition age in which he lived, and as possessing both the courtly manners which are going out and also the commercial tastes and the business knowledge which are coming in. Some critics will, as we have said, find fault with his want of special designs and of a far-reaching policy; but to this generation of Englishmen this was no fault at all. We wish that foreign nations should, as far as may be, solve their own problems; we wish them to gain all the good they can by their own exertions, and to remove all the evil: but we do not wish to take part in their struggles. We fear that we might mistake as to what was best; we fear that in so shifting a scene we might find, years hence, when the truth is known, that we had in fact done exactly the reverse of what we meant, and had really injured what we meant to aid; we fear that amid the confusion our good might turn to evil, and that our help would be a calamity and not a blessing. And for an age like this, Lord Clarendon was a fitting minister; for he had a wise sagacity which taught him to interfere as little, and to refrain from acting as much, as prudence rendered possible.

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MR. LOWE AS CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.

(1871.)

"AN oak," said a great Irish orator, who did not succeed so well as he expected in England,* "an oak should not be transplanted at fifty." And we believe that to be the reason why Mr. Lowe, — though in many respects he has shown great ability as Finance Minister, — upon the whole, has not as yet succeeded better than many much stupider men, nor as well as his genius deserved. Mr. Lowe, before he began his finance studies, had already "invested" so much mind that most men would have had no more left. His career at Oxford was unusually long: he was not a mere student who took high honors, — after that he stayed several years as a working tutor, and has described to a Royal Commission how steadily he worked for ten hours a day as a "coach," and how little in consequence he accepts the "romance" of tuition. And the inevitable result has been that Mr. Lowe has become a scholar, not only as young students become such, but as men of maturer years who mean to earn money by it become scholars; a certain part of the substance of his mind is embarked in that pursuit, and cannot now be transferred to any other. After leaving Oxford, Mr. Lowe made himself not only an excellent English lawyer, but an admirable general jurist: he is acquainted not only with the technicalities of English law, but with the structure of other systems of law and with the principles of scientific jurisprudence; he has studied

* Henry Grattan.

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what Bentham said law "ought" to be, and what Austin said law "must" be: and this too is a very exhausting study, requiring, if the knowledge is really to be acquired as Mr. Lowe has acquired it and retained as he retains it, a great "capital" of mind. No one can wonder that when, on the verge of threescore, he was suddenly made Finance Minister, he should not possess or display so much free and applicable mind as some younger men. Great mind he must always display; but he has not displayed proportionate mind,—proportioned, we mean, to the immense abilities which every one knows he has. After all, there is only room in even the largest head for a certain number of thoughts; and Mr. Lowe had crowded his, long before he had tried finance, with many dissimilar and occupying ideas.

It is true that under our parliamentary system, ministers of as mature an age as Mr. Lowe are not unfrequently transferred from post to post, and are placed in charge of offices of* whose subjects they have no knowledge. No one supposes that Mr. Cardwell knew much of military business before he was made Secretary for War; and yet unquestionably he has pulled the Army Regulation Bill† better through Parliament than the planners who contrived it or the soldiers who will act on it [could have done]. But these transferable statesmen commonly belong to a different class from Mr. Lowe: like Mr. Cardwell, they are trained parliamentary advocates; they have learned to know the House of Commons, and the way of putting an argument so as to suit the House of Commons, as a long-practiced advocate knows the sort of arguments which suit a jury and the most telling way in which to state them to a jury. Sir Robert Peel was once said to know how to "dress up a case for Parliament"‡ better than any one else;

*Text, "with," a palpable slip.—Ed.

†Session of 1871.

‡See page 28 of this volume.

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and in this art there are two secrets, of which Mr. Cardwell is an eminent master. The first is always to content yourself with the minimum of general maxims which will suit your purpose and prove what you want: by so doing, you offend as few people as possible, you startle as few people as possible, and you expose yourself to as few retorts as possible. And the second secret is to make the whole discussion very uninteresting; to leave an impression that the subject is very dry, that it is very difficult, that the department has* attended to the dreary detail of it, and that on the whole it is safer to leave it to the department, and a dangerous responsibility to interfere with the department. The faculty of disheartening adversaries by diffusing on occasion an oppressive atmosphere of business-like dullness is invaluable to a parliamentary statesman.

But these arts Mr. Lowe does not possess. He cannot help being brilliant; the quality of his mind is to put everything in the most lively, most exciting, and most startling form. He cannot talk that monotonous humdrum which men scarcely listen to, which lulls them to sleep, but which seems to them "the sort of thing you would expect," which they suppose is "all right." And Mr. Lowe's mode of using general principles not only is not that which a parliamentary tactician would recommend, but is the very reverse of what he would advise: Mr. Lowe always ascends to the widest generalities. The *axiomata media*, as logicians have called them, — the middle principles, in which most minds feel most reality and on which they find it most easy to rest, — have no charms for him; he likes to go back to the bone, to the abstract, to the attenuated. And if he left these remote principles in their remote unintelligibility, he would not suffer so much: but he makes the dry bones live; he wraps them in illustrations which Macaulay might envy. And he is all the more

* Text, "had," not in apposition with the rest. — Ed.

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effective because he uses our vernacular tongue: the phrases that "the money market must take care of itself,"* and that "it was not the business of the Treasury to cocker up the Bank of England,"† will long be remembered, and will longer impair his influence with grave, quiet, and influential persons. Mr. Lowe startles those who do not like to be startled, and does not compose those who wish to be composed,—those who need a little commonplace to assure them that they are acting on safe principles, that they are not (according to the saying) "lighting the streets with fireworks."

These defects would be felt in any new office; but besides these, Mr. Lowe has one—a physical one—to which he has often himself alluded, and which hampers him beyond expression. In our younger days he would have been cited in books of "entertaining knowledge" as a conspicuous instance of the "pursuit of knowledge under difficulties." Being almost unable to read books with his own eyes, he knows more about books than almost any one who has eyes; a wonderful memory, and an intense wish to know the truth, have filled his head with knowledge: but though great powers may compensate for inherent defects, none, not even the greatest, can annihilate those defects,—they are ineradicable, and the consequences of them will come back again to lessen every victory and to enhance every disaster. It is so with Mr. Lowe in this case: a man who cannot easily read figures for himself, who cannot manipulate them for himself, who cannot throw them into various shapes (as it were, on trial) for himself, cannot be a great financier. Our greatest financiers, Pitt, Peel, and Gladstone, have all of them been men who did not take their figures from others, but who

* "I can only say, with all respect to the money market, that it must take care of itself" (April 12, 1869).

† This expression was probably used in the speech of May 27, 1869; but the Hansard report translates it into more decorous language.—ED.

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spent a great — almost an excessive — labor on the *minutiæ* of them for themselves. It is from no lack of labor and no lack of mind that Mr. Lowe does not do this: by physical constitution he is incapable of it.

Something of this is at the bottom of Mr. Lowe's occasionally defective dealing with small financial forms, which was the only point that Mr. Disraeli made against him in criticizing his Budget: it is hardly possible that a man with such immense disadvantages for business can have his tackle quite as ready and quite as perfect as those who are more fortunate. And Mr. Disraeli is scarcely the man who ought to have made the taunt: no one regards these legal forms with more sublime indifference than he does when it suits his object. "Gentlemen of the long robe," he used to say when in office, "will attend to these details;" and he would have deemed it absurd that a minister, charged with the fate of Cabinets and the policy of measures, should even consider them. And perhaps he was right; perhaps it would have been absurd: but what is unnecessary for one minister cannot be incumbent on another similar minister. It was not for Mr. Disraeli, who has scarcely seemed to be able to see details and technicalities (so exclusively did he look on them from the most elevated heights of policy), to reproach Mr. Lowe with a few trivial, innocuous, and excusable deficiencies in them.

The result of all this is very plain: it is, that Mr. Lowe is under peculiar difficulties in finance; that it is not a region in which his great powers can ever show to the best advantage; that on the contrary, it is a region in which they will frequently be seen to the greatest disadvantage. But there is a profound truth in the saying that "men of pre-eminent ability are always safe"; not of course that so wide a phrase is to be taken exactly to the letter, but that there is a "reserve fund" in the highest ability

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which will enable it to pull through scrapes, to remedy errors, to surmount disasters, which would ruin and bury common men. Mr. Lowe will certainly not have an uncheckered reign at the Exchequer; but he may reign long, he may do much good, and notwithstanding many failures and defects, may leave the special stamp and impress of his mind on many great Budgets and important measures.

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M. GUIZOT.

(1874.)

THE announcement of the death of M. Guizot will take the minds of many back to the cold February evenings in 1848, when London, long used to political calm, was convulsed by a new excitement; when we heard cried in rapid succession, "Resignation of Guizot," "Flight of Louis Philippe," "Proclamation of the Republic;" and when the present chapter of European politics began. M. Guizot lived to see many events and many changes, but none which restored him to pre-eminence or which made him once more a European personage; his name was never cried in the London streets again. M. Guizot was in most respects exactly the opposite of the common English notion of a Frenchman. There floats in this country an idea that a Frenchman is a light, changeable, skeptical being, who is fond of amusement, who is taken with childish shows, who always wants some new thing, who is incapable of fixed belief on any subject and on religion especially; but Guizot was on the contrary a man of fixed and intense belief in religion, who was wholly devoted to serious study, who probably cared as little for the frivolous side of life as any human being who ever lived, who was stiff in manner and sedate in politics to a fault. "A Puritan born in France by mistake" is the description which will most nearly describe him to an ordinary Englishman; for he had all the solidity, the solemnity, and the energy of Puritanism, as well as some of its shortcomings. And it is very natural that such

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should be his character; for he came of a Huguenot family, who really were French Puritans. The French national character is much more various than it is supposed to be according to common English ideas, and the stern variety which M. Guizot represents is one of the most remarkable.

Indeed, in the special peculiarity which colored his political life, he was a most characteristic Frenchman: he represented their excessive propensity to political fear. As we all know, a principal obstacle to good government in France is a deficiency in political courage. At the present moment a very considerable part of the nation are inclined to return to the Empire; not that they are attached to the Empire, not that they do not see its defects, not that they are not ashamed of its end, but because they are so impressed by the difficulties of making any other strong government that their heart fails them. They want something which will save them from the *Commune;* and they are disposed to run back to what saved them from the Commune before, without any sufficient inquiry whether a better safeguard cannot be found, or whether this one will be effectual. The excess of their apprehension dims their eyes and distorts their judgment. Guizot had no partiality for the Empire, or for anything like the Empire; but nevertheless, his whole political life rested on a similar feeling and aimed at a similar end. He too was frightened at revolutionary excess: his father perished in the first revolution. He was born in 1787, and consequently began his intellectual life about 1800, just when the reaction against the revolution was the strongest, when its evil was most exaggerated and when its good was most depreciated. A strong, serious, unoriginal mind, — and such was M. Guizot's, — which receives such penetrating impressions early in life, generally holds them on, in one shape or another, till the end; and so it was in this case. Guizot was devoted through life to what he called

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the "conservative" policy: he was always endeavoring to avert revolution; he was incessantly in dread of tumult; he saw attack and commotion everywhere· but he had no notion what was the real counterforce in France to the revolutionary force. We now know from experience that that force, though it calls itself the force of numbers, can be controlled by appealing to numbers: that the peasant proprietors, who are the majority in France, hate nothing so much and fear nothing so much; that they think revolution may take from them their property, their speck of land, their "all," and therefore they will resist revolution at any time and on any pretense, and will support any power which they think can prevail against it. But Guizot did not perceive this great force: his great *recipe* for preventing revolution was not by extending the suffrage, but by restricting it. He did not see that the masses in France, having property of their own, were only too likely to be timid about property: his scheme was to resist revolution by keeping the suffrage so high that it included only a few in the towns, that it scarcely included any of the masses in the country; he proposed to found the throne of constitutional liberty on a select *bourgeoisie*, few in number, moderate in disposition, easily conciliated by their interests. The revolution of 1848 might have been avoided if he had been willing a little to extend the suffrage; but he would not extend it. The proposals then made for so doing seem now trivial and unimportant, but Guizot sincerely believed that they would ruin the country; sooner than grant them he incurred a revolution. He was so perturbed by the excessive dread of revolution that he could not see what was the true power with which to oppose it; that he threw away a mighty power, that he relied solely on a weak one; that he caused the calamity he was always fearing.

It is this great misfortune which will always color any retrospect of M. Guizot's career, and render it a

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melancholy one. In many minor ways he accomplished much good: as a minister of public instruction he did much — much, perhaps, which no other man at that time could have done — for education in France; when ambassador in England, he did much to prevent a war which was then imminent, and which M. Thiers would have hurried on; through his whole career, by a lofty scrupulosity, he did much to raise the low level of morality in French public life. As an orator he had great triumphs at the tribune, though his eloquence is too little business-like and too academical for our English taste. But notwithstanding these triumphs and these services, his political career must ever be held to be a complete failure: for he failed in the work of his life, — in the aim he had specially chosen as his own; his mission — he would have accepted the word — was to avert revolution, and he caused revolution. Nor is the failure one which was slight in its effects, or which history can forget; on the contrary, every page of present French politics bears witness to its importance. No French republic and no French monarchy can now have nearly as much strength or nearly as much chance of living as the monarchy of July which Guizot destroyed.

Of his literary productions, this is not the place to speak. Nothing can be more unlike ordinary Parisian literature than they are. That literature generally reminds its readers of the old saying that "the French would be the best cooks in Europe if they had got any butcher's meat."* Of French cookery nothing can be more libelous; but of much French literature it would be quite true to say that the writers would be the first in Europe if they only knew anything about their subject. The power of

* Goldsmith, "Citizen of the World," lxxviii.:—"I fancy the French would make the best cooks in the world if they had but meat; as it is, they can dress you out five different dishes from a nettle-pot, [Qy.-top?] seven from a dock-leaf, and twice as many from a frog's haunches."

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expression has been cultivated to an extreme perfection; but unfortunately the writers have neglected the further task of finding anything true and important to say. But M. Guizot's works are the reverse of all this: a work of more solid erudition than the "History of French Civilization" was never written by a German professor, and few Germans have ever written anything so accurately matured and so perfectly mastered. In this respect he contrasts admirably with his great rival: there used to be a story — a just story in the main, we believe — of a critic who betted that he would find five errors in any five pages of Thiers's great history of the Revolution. Even his warmest admirers indeed have never contended that M. Thiers had a scrupulous love of truth,—was a careful collector of evidence or a fine judge of it when collected; but M. Guizot was all three. The labor expended on his books must have been very great, and much more than it would be now; for he has himself helped his successors, certainly to arrive at his own conclusions with greater ease, and perhaps also to arrive at improved conclusions.

From our peculiar view, as an economical statesman M. Guizot has, we are sorry to say, no title to respect: he and his fellow-ministers under Louis Philippe left it to the Empire to improve the material condition of the French people. He did little to promote railways; and he objected to the English treaty of 1860 because it was an approach to Free Trade, — because it would enable "the English manufacturers, after an English commercial crisis, to export their goods to France and to swamp the French manufacturers." The real principles of Free Trade had never penetrated into his mind, any more than into the minds of Louis Philippe's other ministers; and partly on that account, France now looks back to the time of the Empire as to the "golden age" of wealth and industry, and not to the time of the free monarchy.

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We are sorry to have to write so much of blame of one whose character all Europe respected, and some of whose virtues were so valuable to France; but it is one perhaps painful consequence of prolonged old age, that a man's character at death is estimated with perfect [im]partiality, — those who most hated him and those who most loved him are mostly passed away or superseded in the scene of affairs. And if, as in M. Guizot's case, the good which he did was mostly one of temporary moral impression, and the evil which he caused one of lasting political result, there will be always more blame than praise to say. The impalpable virtues can hardly be described, and are mostly forgotten; but the indelible consequences of the political errors are fixed on the face of the world, — they cannot be overlooked, and they must be spoken of.

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PROFESSOR CAIRNES.

(1875.)

We cannot attempt at this moment to give anything like a full estimate of Mr. Cairnes's character, either as a political economist or a political writer. The first few days after the death of one so eminent and so peculiar are never favorable to such a task; and the difficulty is always greater when, as in this case, he wrote much on topics on which public opinion is still divided. We can only attempt a few descriptive words.

The characteristic of Mr. Cairnes's mind was a tenacious grasp of abstract principle. He applied to the subjects of his life exactly the sort of mind with which a great judge applies the principles of law to the facts before him, and he applied it under more difficult circumstances; for in the principles of positive law a judge can absolutely be guided by previous precedent, whereas a thinker in the moral sciences has to make his principles as well as to apply them, — "to find" (at least often) "the dream as well as the interpretation." This quality is not common in any age, but it is particularly uncommon now: the habit of popular writing — a habit which is apt to grow on all who deal with political and moral subjects, for it is only by being in some degree popular that you will be read or can be influential — has a contrary influence; it generates a habit of leaving out difficulties, of saying that which is easy rather than that which is true, that which is clear rather than that which is exact. There are a great many parts of political and economical truth which are in their

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nature very complex, just as many parts of science are so; and in these cases, extreme easiness of comprehension in a writer is a quality to be suspected, for probably it arises from his leaving out a part—frequently the most difficult part—of the subject. Mr. Cairnes never does this: he takes his readers through the subject, just as it seems* to him to be; he does not make it artificially easy, or attempt to please them by lessening its intricacies. And he showed himself even more careless of popularity in another way. The curiosity on such subjects is now far greater than the capacity for gratifying it; severe and abstract reasoning is necessary before they can be mastered, and there are many who dislike severe and abstract reasoning: accordingly, something else is often put forward as if it would do as well,—"figures" are used instead of reasoning. But as Mr. Cairnes always contended, the figures of an instance do not of themselves prove anything beyond that instance; they are most valuable in illustrating a distinct argument, but that argument must accompany them. But as the argument is often more difficult than the illustration, it is apt not to be used; and "political economy" is in danger of dissolving into "statistics," which is much as if anecdotes of animals were substituted for the science of biology.

The constant rigor with which Mr. Cairnes withstood these temptations has given his writings a very peculiar character. There is a Euclidian precision about them which fits them for a tonic for the mind, and which makes much other writing seem but "soft stuff" after we have been reading them: at any rate, you feel that you have seen in all likelihood the worst of the subject; you have been in company with one who did not spare himself anything, and who despised readers that wished to be spared anything. Reading his works is like living on high ground; the "thin air of abstract truth" which they

* Text, "seemed," an evident error.—ED.

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give you braces the mind just as fine material air does the body.

The wonder that this incessant intellectual vigor was displayed for years by a wasting invalid, hardly able to move, and often in the most intense pain, has long been familiar to his friends, and has now been published to the world. Much as those who read his writings valued his life, they felt almost forbidden to grieve when they heard of his death; for it seemed selfish to wish that their instruction should be purchased at the cost of such pain as his. Why a mind like his should have been created, and then the power to use it at all fully withheld, is one of the mysteries of which in this world we have no solution.

By far the most remarkable of Mr. Cairnes's writings, in our judgment, are his "Logic of Political Economy" and his essays on some of the "Unsettled Questions," recently published. In the first he defines better — as we think — than any previous writer the exact sort of science which political economy is, the kind of reasoning which it uses, and the nature of the relation which it, as an abstract science, bears to the concrete world; those who know how many different opinions have been held on this, and how difficult a part of the subject it is as a rule, prize, we think, most highly what Mr. Cairnes has said on it. In his recent essays on "Unsettled Questions" in political economy, Mr. Cairnes takes up the hardest parts of the subject, and discusses them with a consistent power — it might almost be said with an enjoyment — which is scarcely given to any one who now remains to us. As the questions with which he deals are "unsettled," it would be premature to assume the truth of his conclusions; but this may be said, — that all who hereafter write on these problems not only ought to study what he has said, but also to reply to it if they do not agree with it, — a process which (if we may speak from some experience) they will not find at all easy.

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We do not mean that Mr. Cairnes has conclusively solved these problems: there are several on which our opinions are not his. And all will agree that the recluse life which his health compelled him to lead, deprived him of information, and especially of a sort of easy familiarity with the course of business, which the greatest ability could not wholly make up for. But under such circumstances the wonder is, not that what he did was sometimes imperfect, but that he was able to do anything.

We have spoken of Mr. Cairnes principally as an economist, partly because that is more especially our own province, but partly also because we think that was the capacity in which his powers were best fitted to work, and by which he will be most remembered; but his other writings have much and characteristic merit, though this is not the time to attempt an estimate of them. In the presence of great difficulties, silence is "better than many words"; and there are few greater difficulties than that a mind so strong and pure should have been so thrust aside from life and subjected to so much pain.

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MR. DISRAELI AS A MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

(1876.)

NOTHING could be more out of place or premature than to review as yet Mr. Disraeli's career, — that career is not yet ended; but some remarks may be made on him as a member of the House of Commons, in which he has sat for forty years, and where he obtained his political eminence and power. That part of his career is certainly over, for he has chosen to leave its peculiar scene. During this long period Mr. Disraeli has filled four parts.

First, that of a political free-lance or outsider; and it was in this that he first obtained fame. The best opportunity for such a man is, when parties are breaking up, when secret feelings are in many minds, when cautious men do not know what to say. The latter part of Sir Robert Peel's ministry was such a period: from the time when he became conspicuously and obviously a Free Trader, there was always a secret anger in the Conservative ranks which craved for an outlet, but which no "regular man" could express; this Mr. Disraeli spoke out. From the time of Mr. Milne's sugar amendment in 1844* till the completion of the disruption of the Tories in 1846, Mr. Disraeli poured epigram upon epigram and innuendo on innuendo on the "organized hypocrisy"† of his professed leader; and there is no doubt that

* Speech of June 17.

† Closing words of speech of March 17, 1845, on the "Agricultural Interest."

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Sir Robert Peel suffered exceedingly under the smart. He was in every way a most sensitive man, and he was especially sensitive in all that related to the House of Commons, which was the scene of his life, and to his position there: but now he was, for the first time in his life, exposed to a style of attack to which he had not the sort of power to reply, but which was for the moment the most effective style of any; and he was pained accordingly. No "free lance," perhaps, has ever achieved so much and so suddenly as Mr. Disraeli then did. Upon this part of his career a historical examiner would give him first-rate marks, — much greater than he would give to any competitor.

The next, and far the longest, of Mr. Disraeli's parliamentary parts is that of leader of Opposition: and in this he showed eminent mind, — not equal to that of his free-lance period, but still very great; his powers of epigram and amusing nonsense gave infinite aid, year after year, to a party that was to be beaten. And after his fashion, he showed a high magnanimity and conscience in not opposing or hampering the ministry on great questions, — say of foreign policy, when his so doing would hurt the country; but this praise must end here. On all minor parliamentary questions, Mr. Disraeli has simply no conscience at all: he regards them as a game, — as an old special pleader regards* litigation; to be played so as to show your skill and so as to win, but without any regard to the consequences. Indeed, Mr. Disraeli at bottom believes that they have no consequences; that all is settled by questions of race, "Caucasian or Semitic," and that it is simple pedantry in such things to be scrupulous. And still worse than this, — which is an amusing defect after all, and excusable (for there *are* many deeper issues and causes than are dreamed of in parliamentary philosophy), — Mr. Disraeli often showed in Opposition a turn for nonsense,

* Text, "regarded," palpably incorrect. — Ed.

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which was *not* amusing. He has many gifts, but he has not the gift of thinking out a subject, and when he tries to produce grave thought he only makes platitudes. And some of his "mares' nests," like his difficulty in the Franco-German war arising out of our guaranty to the Saxon provinces of Prussia,* have been almost incredible, and could only have been discovered by a mind which, with many elements of genius, has also an element of hare-brained recklessness. Drearier hearing or drearier reading than Mr. Disraeli's Opposition harangues, when they were philosophical, can hardly anywhere be found. But still, though with these and other defects, he *did* lead the Tory Opposition through long melancholy years, when one did not know who else *could* have or who *would* have led it.

The next of Mr. Disraeli's parliamentary parts was that of leader of a ministry in a minority, where again he was first-rate: he showed sometimes — in 1852, in 1858, and in 1866 — a nimbleness, a tact, and [a] dexterity far surpassing, probably, anything that Parliament has ever seen of a similar kind. He "hit the House" — to use a phrase which Burke used of a like but very inferior person† — he "hit the House between the wind and the water," and cut with a light witticism knots insoluble by solemn argument. If, by a series of "selections," nature had made a man so fit for this kind of work, it would have been a marvel; but Mr. Disraeli drifted into it, as if by chance, from quite another calling and another sphere.

Lastly, Mr. Disraeli has been lately, and was but yesterday, leader of a ministry in a majority; and here there was a wonderful contrast, — so far from being first-rate, he was ninth-rate. He seemed to resemble those guerrilla commanders who, having achieved

* Speech of Aug. 1, 1870.

† Charles Townshend; see speech on "American Taxation," in his works.

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great exploits with scanty and ill-trained troops, nevertheless are utterly at a loss and fail when they are placed at the head of a first-rate army. In 1867 he made a minority achieve wonderful things; but in 1876, when he had the best majority — the most numerous and obedient — since Mr. Pitt, he did nothing with it. So far from being able to pass great enactments, he could not even dispatch ordinary business at decent hours: the gravest and sincerest of Tory members — men who hardly murmur at anything — have been heard to complain that it *was* hard that after voting so well and doing so little, they should be kept up so very late. The session just closed will be known in parliamentary annals as one of the least effective or memorable on record, and yet one of the most fatiguing. And this collapse is no accident in Mr. Disraeli's career, but a thing essentially characteristic of the man, and which might have been predicted by any one who had analyzed the traits which he had shown before. If we may be pardoned the metaphor, though his chaff is exquisite his wheat is poor stuff: the solid part of his mind — the part fit for regulating bills and clauses — is as inferior to that of an ordinary man of decent ability as the light and imaginative part is superior. An incessant and almost avowed inaccuracy pervades him: and if you ask such a man to regulate the stupendous business of Parliament, — to arrange, and if possible effect, the most complex *agenda* that ever was in the world, — failure is inevitable; it is like entering a light hack for a ploughing-match. In the last parliamentary situation, Mr. Disraeli has scarcely seemed to be what he used to be; and this because that situation was the one for which he was the least suited, and the last in which he should have been placed. As so often happens, having obtained the ambition of his life, — to be a minister with power, — he found he had only got where he ought not to be, he found that he could not wield the power.

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And two things have been common to Mr. Disraeli all through these positions. In them all he has charmed the House, and has given debates in which he took part a kind of nice literary flavor which other debates had not, and which there is no one left to give to them. He was the best representative whom the "Republic of Letters" ever had in Parliament, for he made his way by talents—especially by a fascination of words—essentially literary. And on the other hand, though he charmed Parliament, he never did anything more: he had no influence with the country; such a vast power over Englishmen as has been possessed by Lord Palmerston and by Mr. Gladstone was out of his way altogether. Between Mr. Disraeli and common Englishmen there was too broad a gulf, too great a difference; he was simply unintelligible to them. "Ten miles from London," to use the old phrase, there is scarcely any real conception of him. His mode of regarding parliamentary proceedings as a play and a game is incomprehensible to the simple and earnest English nature. Perhaps he has gained more than he has lost by the English not understanding him; at any rate, the fact remains that the special influence of this great gladiator never passed the walls of the amphitheater. He has ruled the country by ruling Parliament, but has never had any influence in Parliament reverberating from the nation itself.

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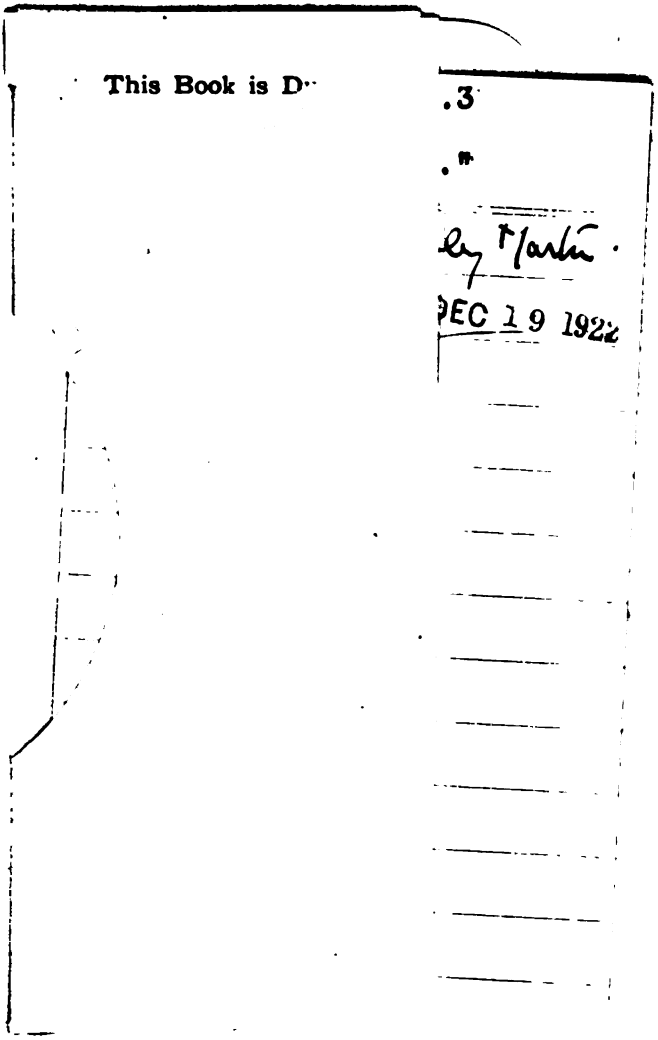

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